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General Assembly

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New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Rinkēvičs (Latvia): First of all, I wish to congratulate you, Madam, on your assuming the position of President of the General Assembly at its current session and provide assurances of Latvia's full support. I also express gratitude to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his active role as President of the General Assembly at its previous session.

I address the Assembly at a very special time for my country. This year, Latvia celebrates its centennial. A remarkable change occurred 100 years ago. The end of the First World War and the collapse of empires resulted in the liberation of nations and brought about a fundamental revision of Europe's political map. A new Europe was born, which promised much more than just self-determination, freedom and democracy. The peoples of Europe expected lasting peace and prosperity. Those objectives were pursued both individually and collectively. Peoples' right to self-determination materialized in concrete forms. New nation States were born.

The Paris Peace Conference laid the foundations for the League of Nations, which was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain universal peace through the development of binding norms and multilateralism. Latvia also joined the League of Nations, firmly establishing its status as a full-fledged member of the international family. However, the weakness of the League of Nations was one of the main reasons why Latvia, for a time, lost its independence. The history of both the Soviet and Nazi occupations of Latvia and much of the European continent is a harsh reminder of what happens when serious violations of international law are tolerated. We know all too well the consequences of allowing countries to break those principles with impunity. In Latvia's case, it was a life under the occupation of Nazi and Communist regimes of terror and gross violations of human rights.

We are grateful to all those nations that for decades implemented policies of non-recognition of the occupation of the Republic of Latvia and stood by their principles. In accordance with international law, the State of Latvia continued to exist throughout the occupation period. However, the Russian Federation — the official successor to the Soviet Union — still does not acknowledge the well-documented facts of history. I call on Russia to embrace the truth and clearly condemn the actions of the Soviet Union.

Since the restoration of independence in 1991, Latvia has been advocating compliance with international law and human rights. The protection of those principles was necessary throughout our transition to a democratic society, which was governed by the rule of law, and in building Latvia's international role. Today, Latvia is

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a modern and proud European nation and an active member of the world community.

The topic of this year's debate invites us to focus on the very heart of the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations starts with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations", thus pointing out the Organization's aim to represent the rights and interests of every human being on the planet. The United Nations was founded not only to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights but also to respect the obligations of international law.

Human rights, including women's and children's rights, are among the most fundamental values of the United Nations. The Organization must be capable of defending those values in any situation, be it the bombing of civilians in Syria, the massacre of Rohingyas in Myanmar, the persecution of Crimean Tatars by the Russian authorities or other human rights violations wherever they occur. This year, we mark 70 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It remains the main global source of inspiration to continue working to ensure that all people may live with dignity and benefit from the blessings of freedom and equality.

Security and human rights go hand in hand. Security cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The freedom of the press has been and continues to be vital to peace, justice and human rights for all. I therefore once again urge Russia to release the illegally detained Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov. I call on the Myanmar authorities to free the two Reuters journalists Kyaw Soe Oo and Wa Lone. I also call on Russia to immediately release the other 64 Ukrainian political prisoners it has detained, including journalist Roman Sushchenko. I urge nations to adhere to their commitments and obligations under international law and international human rights law, especially with regard to the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, which have notably deteriorated in the past year.

In order to strengthen the role of the United Nations, efforts should be made to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In August, the world lost an inspirational leader and a strong advocate for peace and human rights, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who argued that we will not enjoy security without development, nor development without security, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights. The three pillars of the Charter are greater than the sum of their individual parts. Economic progress and sustainable development are based on long-term stability, which in turn requires peace and security and respect for human rights.

The United Nations must be able to change, undertake serious reforms and thereby respond to the demands of the twenty-first century accordingly. We need a relevant and efficient United Nations. Latvia welcomes the reforms initiated by the Secretary-General in the three areas of peace and security, development and management. It is important that the reforms be implemented swiftly. This is a unique Organization with a heavy responsibility. The authority of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security must be preserved. Security Council reform is long overdue, and we should all aim to strengthen the efficiency of that important body. However, the stalemate in the reform of the Security Council must not impede progress elsewhere. The reform of the United Nations must include serious improvements in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Achieving sustainable development through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be complete without strengthening human rights around the world. The Human Rights Council must be strong and effective and have the ability to react quickly to serious human rights violations in any part of the world. Latvia is actively engaged in the process of improving the effectiveness of the Council. I invite all countries to join that process with an open mind.

Latvia supports the Secretary-General's vision and approach with regard to focusing on prevention at the United Nations. That is even more important given the increasingly complex global security challenges that we face. Conflicts and crises around the world that could not be prevented drag on for years and decades, destroying human lives, holding back development and draining the resources of the United Nations.

The conflicts in Syria, Ukraine and Yemen continue to take a heavy toll on civilians. We must also not forget the protracted instability in Burundi and Afghanistan. The mere length of preventable conflicts undermines the credibility of international organizations, including the United Nations.

As the main guarantor of international peace and security, the Security Council has a particular responsibility in preventing conflicts, acts of aggression and mass atrocities. The use of the veto to shield narrow national interests in situations of mass atrocities is completely unacceptable.

Territorial integrity and sovereignty, as enshrined in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, must be respected by all. The Russian Federation must stop its aggression against Ukraine. Together with the international community, we will maintain a non-recognition policy with regard to the illegal annexation of Crimea. I believe that one day international law and justice will prevail and that the territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as that of other eastern partners of the European Union, will be restored. The United Nations, along with relevant regional players, must remain involved and committed to resolving the protracted conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The history of the Baltic States is proof of the moral power of international law and justice. The international community must be more active in resolving those issues.

No nation was ever secure in isolation. Member States therefore have a responsibility to ensure one another's security. Clear consequences for aggressors, resolute international pressure and accountability for violations of international law are essential for the political resolution of a conflict. Settlement of the protracted conflicts in wider Europe remains of the utmost importance to the international community.

Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals is the ultimate prevention agenda. They address the drivers and root causes of instability and conflict. Investing in human dignity, eradicating poverty, fostering climate resilience and promoting economic and social progress will reduce the incidence of conflict, instability and despair.

The principles of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability therefore guide all Latvia's activities in the area of development cooperation. Furthermore, gender equality is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It is an essential precondition for inclusive sustainable development and for economic growth and prosperity.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, combatants accounted for 90 per cent of conflict-related casualties. Today, 90 per cent of casualties in armed conflicts are civilians. Conventional arms kill approximately 500,000 people a year, of whom 70,000 are killed in conflict zones. Those figures clearly prove that the international community must focus not only on weapons of mass destruction but also on conventional arms.

With that in mind, Latvia will assume the presidency of the Arms Trade Treaty next year and will spare no effort to promote its objectives. I call on all States to become parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, which would also contribute directly to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We must join efforts to strengthen the principle of multilateralism. In an interdependent and globalized world, we can address and resolve global problems only through multilateral means. In that regard, the United Nations stands out as a good global governance instrument, but it is not a global Government. The ability of the United Nations to meet the challenges of the world today depends heavily on the decisions of Governments and on the support of populations for those decisions. With that in mind, I wish to emphasize that the future of multilateralism will depend more on changes in the attitudes of Member States than on reforms of the United Nations system. However, as long as the fundamental characteristics of the international system are not changed, the United Nations can only strive for higher effectiveness and efficiency.

We should accept the United Nations for what it is. It is not perfect, yet it is a very necessary instrument for the maintenance of peace, economic development and the codification of international law for a more secure world. The United Nations can and must be a significant global player, a community of nations that is proud of its values and committed to multilateralism and the principles of international law.

Member States must support our Organization in order to project those values worldwide, thereby affirming its unique role on the global stage. To achieve that purpose, the United Nations needs well-functioning norms, efficient institutions and a clear vision of its policies.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rimbink Pato, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

Mr. Pato (Papua New Guinea): I am pleased today to address the General Assembly on behalf of my Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Peter Paire O'Neill, and the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea.

I congratulate you, Madam President, and the people of Ecuador on your election as the first woman leader from the Latin American and the Caribbean region to preside over the General Assembly. You can count on Papua New Guinea as a partner committed to supporting your work during your presidency. I would also like to thank the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his excellent work in the past year. It is also important to commend the leadership of the Secretary-General for the reform of the United Nations and its systems, the United Nations being an organization that is so fundamental to the peace, prosperity and security of the world.

This is an exciting year for Papua New Guinea because, throughout 2018, we are hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. In so doing, our country is emerging on the global stage as never before.

Located in the Pacific Ocean, we are part of a vast blue continent of island nations linked by sea. We also border with South-East Asia and are within sight of Australia. We have more than 8 million people, the biggest economy and the largest land mass of the Pacific island countries. We are joining with our Pacific sisters and brothers in a mighty regional endeavour to protect the ocean and its bounty and to bring prosperity to our peoples.

Nations near and far are learning that our country, Papua New Guinea, is a great treasury of riches. We have the third-largest rainforest in the world, after Brazil and the Congo. We are guardians of a third of the global supply of tuna, the fish that feeds the world. Our land is home to vast storehouses of gold, silver, nickel, oil and gas.

We are one people forged together from more than 1,000 tribes. With more than 800 distinct languages, we are the most linguistically diverse nation on Earth. Like all developing countries, we have issues to face, but we do not let them daunt us as we strive for progress and prosperity.

This year, we are taking a giant stride as we host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. The APEC economies encompass 39 per cent of the world's population and 48 per cent of the world's trade. Among the participants in the forum are the United States, the People's Republic of China, Japan and other significant economies. APEC itself is, in many ways, a regional example of attempts to achieve what States Members of the United Nations are working so hard to accomplish.

Many issues are on the table either formally or in informal meetings on the sidelines, namely, first, prosperity through free trade, which is the founding rationale for the APEC-plus approach; secondly, cleaning up and protecting the natural environment; thirdly, inclusiveness, so that none of our precious human beings are left behind; fourthly, embracing the digital economy; and, fifthly and very importantly, gender equality.

International trade is an important engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication, as well as a critical source for financing development and achieving sustainable development. As the host of APEC, we have opportunities like never before. It is the largest international event in our country's history. We are well prepared for the leaders summit in mid-November. The world will see the stunning APEC House, an outstanding architectural creation inspired by our local culture. We thank the APEC economies for their material and organizational support, including, in particular, Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, the United States of America and many others that are too numerous to mention. To add to the Pacific island flavour of the event, we have invited all Pacific island leaders to come to our country during this time.

Through APEC, we have opportunities to attract trade and foreign direct investment. It will continue to provide us with access to knowledge and to a dialogue with APEC economic leaders, who will be in attendance. Such capacity-building support in our country will lead directly to business growth and the creation of more jobs for our people. However, given our small and open economy, which is subject to external forces, we join all other members of the international community in promoting respect for and the strengthening of the rules-based, international multilateral trading system.

Hosting the APEC event is a huge challenge for a developing country such as ours, and people can sometimes paralyse themselves by focusing only on their perceived shortfalls or problems. But we in Papua

New Guinea decided to try it. That perspective also applies to our view of the United Nations and its work.

Of course, we must acknowledge and work to eliminate the great problems confronting us today. However, in doing so, let us all keep our eyes on the prize: our vision of peace, security, a return to a pristine environment and ongoing prosperity. The key to overcoming the varied challenges lies within us — we the peoples of the United Nations. Let us work on being united and being stronger together in a system based on mutual respect, friendship, dialogue and multilateralism. Unity, of course, is the answer. It is the greatest strength on the planet.

Two weeks ago, Papua New Guinea celebrated its forty-third anniversary of independence as an unbroken democracy. We continue to consolidate our economic and structural reforms, supported by responsible monetary and fiscal policies aimed at having a balanced budget. With recovering oil and gas prices and several well-advanced new major energy and mining projects, we are optimistic about our future economic outlook.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a solid pathway that holds great promise for the international community. The choice to enjoy its full potential lies in our hands. At the Pacific regional level, earlier this month, in Nauru, our forum leaders reaffirmed our collective commitment. The call for collective action is set out in the Boe Declaration, a copy of which was delivered to His Excellency the Secretary-General yesterday. At the national level, we recognize the importance of putting in place the basic building blocks needed to enable sustainable, inclusive and participatory development. Both Australia and New Zealand, which are our good friends, have eloquently addressed the General Assembly on issues facing our region and the world and on the requirements and obligations for collective action.

An essential part of our development challenge is harnessing the vastly untapped potential of our increasing population of young people, which today constitutes approximately 60 per cent of our total population. Creating employment opportunities in both the formal and the informal sectors is a key priority in our efforts to address the needs of young people in our country. We have hopes for the transformative nature of the digital economy, which is truly a game-changer.

In addition, one of our greatest challenges is to protect women and girls and to ensure that they have full equality in our society. We believe that women's equality is a fundamental human right. We have a very long way to go in that area. However, we are determined to find ways to make progress towards achieving that objective, for the sake of women and girls themselves and for the good of the nation. In fact, our long-term advancement depends on making great strides in what we believe is a very crucial area.

We are working hard to do that through policies and laws, combating gender-based violence, providing business opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, such as microcredit schemes, and investing in our girls' and women's education at all levels of our education system. The changes are noticeable in my country, as we have put an additional 1 million young people in schools, many of whom are girls. We of course express our gratitude for the support of our multilateral and bilateral development partners, including the United Nations system, in assisting us in more ways than one in achieving our goals.

We are preparing our people to cope with the increasing dangers arising from climate change, which are very real for us. Earlier this month, as I have said, at the Pacific Island Forum leaders meeting, in Nauru, we reaffirmed our strong commitment to working together to combat the adverse impacts of climate change under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and other frameworks for the resilient development of the Pacific region. The Boe Declaration of the Pacific Island Forum leaders makes our position clear. We therefore strongly welcome the Secretary-General's climate summit to be held in September 2019.

In February, Papua New Guinea experienced a tragic and unprecedented earthquake, the worst in our history. It hit five provinces, killed nearly 200 people and displaced nearly 600,000 others. Many others were injured and traumatized. Vital infrastructure was destroyed. The national economy slowed. Compounding our situation were two separate volcanic eruptions.

We are not alone. Accordingly, we sympathize with other countries, such as Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, China, the United States of America, the countries of the Caribbean and others that have been affected in recent times by months of natural disasters and climate-change-induced challenges. We express our gratitude to our bilateral partners, including the United Nations system, Australia, New Zealand, China,

Japan and others, as well as the private sector and civil -society groups, which stood with us in our time of need. We are now revamping our economy and disaster-related plans to address similar events that may occur in the future.

We naturally welcome the efforts made to replenish the financing available through the Green Climate Fund and thank the contributors for their generosity. Improved and timely access is imperative, especially for small island developing countries such as ours, in order to benefit from that important support to help us to mitigate, adapt and build resilience to the ravages of climate change and its adverse impacts and natural disasters. Again, this is a call for collective global action that all small island developing States will benefit from and seek accordingly.

Our Government notes the international community's increasing interest in the imminent referendum in June 2019 in Papua New Guinea's Autonomous Region of Bougainville under the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We are fully committed to the Agreement. This year, we appointed the former Prime Minister of Ireland, Mr. Bertie Ahern, to preside over the work of the Bougainville Referendum Commission. We are eager for the Commission to begin its mandate soon. We are again grateful to our multilateral and bilateral development partners, including the United Nations, for working together with us on this issue of national importance for my country. However, we want to emphasize that the work done through partnerships should in no way undermine the sovereignty of Papua New Guinea over its territory, in accordance with international law.

We welcome the easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula, commend the efforts made by all parties involved, and further encourage peaceful dialogue. We support the moves to keep sanctions in place, not as a punishment but as a real incentive to get rid of nuclear weapons and fully implement all Security Council resolutions in order to bring prosperity to the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Accordingly, we applaud and support the efforts of the President of the General Assembly to draw global attention to the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. For our part, we are working towards signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Let me take this opportunity to share the current status of the refugees and migrants on our Manus Island with the General Assembly. The processing centre was officially closed by my Government on 31 October 2017, following the decision of the Supreme Court in April 2016. We are therefore working closely with Australia in resettling qualified asylum-seekers, including in the United States. Other migrants remain in our country, each of whom will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. That is our contribution, within the limit of our means, in partnership with Australia, to addressing human trafficking, people-smuggling and international crime.

As a maritime nation, Papua New Guinea considers the oceans agenda to be of great importance, as it contributes significantly to our nation's well-being. We are working to ensure equitable returns from our marine resources, particularly by combating illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing in Papua New Guinea's territorial waters. We are grateful for the close cooperation of like-minded countries in the World Trade Organization that are working to address harmful fisheries subsidies that foster IUU fishing. At the Pacific Islands Forum meeting, under our "Blue Pacific Continent" theme, we have agreed to secure the region's maritime boundaries, work to eliminate marine litter and enhance maritime surveillance so as to deter illicit activities.

In conclusion, I want to draw the Assembly's attention once again to our country as we prepare to host the APEC leaders summit in November. As the world increasingly turns its attention to the Pacific Ocean, we are witnessing the enhanced interest of a range of countries, such as Australia, China, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. As one of the nations of the Blue Pacific Continent, we welcome that interest. However, we urge everyone to play an appropriate role in accordance with the accepted rules of international order so that the blue Pacific Ocean will be a zone of cooperation, stability and security, and an environment of pristine beauty for future prosperity.

I would therefore like to conclude by expressing the fervent hope of all our peoples that the Pacific Ocean forever lives up to the meaning of its name — the ocean of peace.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdallah (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend our congratulations to you, Madam President, and your friendly nation on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I assure you, Madam, of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman's cooperation as you guide the Assembly to success in this session.

We also express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, for the way in which he steered the Assembly's work and for the decisions that were taken under his leadership. We also take this opportunity to fully commend Secretary-General António Guterres for his efforts to strengthen the role of the Organization and reform its mechanisms in order to better achieve the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

The work of the United Nations must focus on addressing challenges, settling international disputes and conflicts, and achieving peace. Given that my country believes that dialogue and negotiation are the best means to resolve differences, we emphasize that the Sultanate of Oman will spare no effort in supporting initiatives that lead to peace, security and stability in the Middle East and throughout the world. We consider peace to be the main building block for stability and development. Accordingly, we hope that Member States will collaborate in ways that are consistent with the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

The Palestinian question is the central issue in the Middle East. The international community's cooperation in creating an environment conducive to the parties concerned ending the conflict is an urgent strategic necessity. We believe that, despite the difficulties in the current situation and the impasse in the dialogue, an environment favourable to fruitful discussions between the Palestinian and Israeli parties that might lead to a comprehensive settlement based on the two-State solution would be more welcome than ever, especially since the absence of a Palestinian State will only perpetuate violence and terrorism.

The Sultanate of Oman is willing to make every effort to restore a climate of optimism so that a comprehensive agreement can be reached and a future of peaceful coexistence between the Palestinians and the Israelis built. The creation of a peaceful environment between the Palestinian and Israeli parties is essential to establishing peace in the Middle East region as a whole.

We also call on the countries of the world, particularly the United States of America — which plays an essential role in achieving peace and stability in the world — to consider all available opportunities to support peace efforts and to facilitate the work of international organizations. We must not allow peace to be sacrificed.

The suffering of the Republic of Yemen can be seen in the tragic economic and humanitarian situation in the country, which stems from the collapse of infrastructure in the health, education and economy sectors and the loss of other basic services that affect the daily lives of citizens in Yemen, as well as the spread of disease, inadequate medical treatment and a lack of medicines. That tragic situation demands that we all redouble our efforts to help Yemen.

The international community must implement a project that would allow the Yemeni people in various provinces to gain access to humanitarian aid, while facilitating the use of airports and seaports to that end. Indeed, the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen requires that such measures, at a minimum, be taken. Accordingly, my country welcomes the efforts of the United Nations and the Arab coalition countries to establish a humanitarian medical airlift for patients suffering from critical conditions so that they can receive proper medical treatment. Those scheduled flights are being supervised by the United Nations in collaboration with the Yemeni parties.

My country also underscores its support for the efforts of Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. We call for further efforts to be made to support his mission, in particular to enable the holding of meetings and consultations with all Yemeni parties and the provision of transportation of the parties so that they can participate in such meetings. We believe that a political solution should be based on the reality on the ground in Yemen and that all Yemeni parties and political entities in the country and abroad should be given a chance to participate in planning a bright future for their country.

As we are deeply affected by the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people, we would like to emphasize that the Sultanate of Oman will continue to provide facilities and humanitarian assistance to the brotherly Yemeni people, and that the land, sea

and air outlets between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen, which are the only available means for Yemenis to interact with the outside world, will remain open, based on the principles of brotherhood and good-neighbourliness and the deep historical and social ties linking our peoples.

We commend the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, for his efforts to help the Syrian parties develop a constitutional foundation for the country and build on the positive outcomes of the talks in Geneva, Astana and Sochi so as to stop the war, achieve national reconciliation and end the conflict. We hope that the joint efforts and cooperation that we are now seeing in Syria and other places of conflict will continue.

My country welcomes the positive developments in the Horn of Africa and the understandings reached by States in the region. They should result in restoring confidence and ending disputes. We welcome the efforts of Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the key role played by his country in helping to achieve security and stability in the Horn of Africa region.

In conclusion, my country renews its call on all countries of the world to adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and resolve their differences by peaceful means, that is, without resorting to war, in the light of war's tragic consequences, so as to ensure that the peoples of the world can enjoy security, stability, development and prosperity.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India.

Ms. Swaraj (India) (*spoke in Hindi; English text provided by the delegation*): On my own behalf and on behalf of my country, India, I should like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. As a woman, I feel doubly proud that this honour has been bestowed on you. I also recall, with equal pride, that the first woman to occupy this eminent position was an Indian — Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit — in 1953, at the General Assembly at its eight session. I also thank former President Miroslav Lajčák for successfully presiding over the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

We received the tragic news this morning of a tsunami and an earthquake, which occurred simultaneously. From this rostrum, on behalf of India, I wish to convey our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Indonesia. I would also like to assure them that India will cooperate in helping them during this trying time.

The United Nations is the world's principal multilateral organization, where nations seek balm for the wounds of history and a platform for solutions and where less developed nations sit with their more fortunate brethren to formulate plans that can cor skewed economic imbalances. In 2015, we establis 2030 as a critically important horizon for 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A common refrain since 2015 has been that we will reach that horizon only if India finds its way to that destination; otherwise, we will fail.

I assure the General Assembly through you, Madam President, that India will not let us fail. We are totally committed to achieving those objectives for our own people. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has initiated an unprecedented economic and social transformation that will help our country achieve its SDG benchmarks well before the deadline. I will provide an overview to illustrate the world's largest-scale exercise in poverty elimination and social transformation.

Through the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, the world's largest financial inclusion scheme, more than 320 million Indians who had previously never seen the inside of a bank now have bank accounts. The programme has enabled the poor to receive direct benefit transfers from the Government's welfare programmes into their personal accounts, thereby stopping waste and corruption within the system. Similarly, Ayushman Bharat Yojana, the world's largest health insurance programme, was launched by Prime Minister Modi a few days ago, on 23 September. That revolutionary scheme will benefit 500 million Indians, who will receive insurance coverage of 500,000 rupees per family annually. We have a prayer in India — *Sarve Santu Niramaya* — which means "May all be free from illness". The Ayushman Bharat Yojana, or National Health Protection Scheme, is the answer to that prayer.

Similarly, we have launched the largest-scale housing programme in the world aimed at ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head. Under the

programme, we have set for ourselves a target of nearly 21 million homes by 2022. So far, more than 5 million homes for the poor have already been built. Two extremely effective programmes have also been initiated to increase the skill levels of those waiting to be employed through the National Skill Development Corporation and the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) programme, which seeks to turn the poor into entrepreneurs. I stress that more than 140 million Indians have taken out MUDRA loans. The most significant aspect of the MUDRA scheme is the fact that 76 per cent of its beneficiaries are women. At the heart of Prime Minister Modi's transformative vision is a radical idea, which is that uplifting any nation is best achieved through the comprehensive empowerment of women. All the programmes that I have just mentioned have the welfare of women at their core. Last year, I spoke about the Ujjwala programme (see A/72/PV.19), through which, I am happy to report, 50 million free liquid-gas connections have been provided so far.

Another such initiative is the maternity benefit programme, in which women in India are provided with 26 weeks of paid leave to care for their newborns. As a woman, Madam President, you will understand better than most how vitally important that programme is for every mother. Some developed nations with huge economies do not provide more than six weeks' paid leave, thereby leading to a continuing struggle for more time off. In India, we have implemented what women across the world need, namely, 26 weeks of paid maternity leave.

In 2022, free India will be 75 years old. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pledged to build a New India by then. What kind of India will that be? That India will be a clean, healthy, prosperous, secure, educated, developed, energized and strong India. That is our horizon for India in 2022, and we will reach it, as we are sparing no effort to meet that goal.

The greatest challenges of our [illegible] are the existential threats of climate change and terrorism. Underdeveloped and developing nations are the most affected victims of climate change. They have neither the capacity nor the resources to meet that crisis. The countries that have exploited nature for their short-term needs cannot abdicate their responsibilities in that matter. If we wish to save the world from the adverse effects of climate change, the developed nations must lift up the deprived with financial and technical resources. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities was reiterated in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Prime Minister Modi, together with the Prime Minister of France, launched the International Solar Alliance. Sixty-eight nations have become members of the Alliance so far. In March, India and France chaired the founding conference of the Alliance, in which 120 countries participated. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Prime Minister Modi has been acknowledged as a champion in that area. He is also working towards realizing the principle of one sun, one grid, since he believes that, as there is only one sun, there should also be a single universal grid. If that goal is achieved, we will be witness to a major revolution in the energy sector, which will represent a major milestone in combating all phenomena related to climate change.

I mentioned terrorism as the second existential threat to humankind. We imagined that the advent of the twenty-first century would see an age of common good characterized by cooperation but, here in New York, the horrific tragedy of 11 September and, in Mumbai, the catastrophe of 26 November became nightmares that shattered our dreams. The demon of terrorism now stalks the world at a faster pace in some places, and at a slower one in others, but it is life-threatening everywhere. In our case, terrorism is bred not in some faraway land but across our border to the west. Our neighbour's expertise is not restricted to serving as a spawning ground for terrorism; our neighbour is also an expert in trying to mask malevolence with verbal duplicity. The most startling evidence of that duplicity was the fact that Osama Bin Laden, the architect and ideologue of 11 September, was given safe haven in Pakistan.

America had declared Osama Bin Laden to be its most dangerous enemy and had launched an exhaustive, worldwide search to bring him to justice. What America could perhaps not comprehend was that Osama would find sanctuary in a country that claimed to be America's friend and ally, namely, Pakistan. Eventually, America's intelligence services discovered the truth of that hypocrisy, and its special forces delivered justice. But Pakistan continued to behave as if nothing had happened. Pakistan's commitment to terrorism as an instrument of official policy has not abated one bit, nor has its practice of hypocrisy. The killers of 11 September met their fate but the mastermind of 26 November, Hafiz Saeed, continues to roam the

streets of Pakistan with impunity. What is heartening is that the world is no longer ready to believe Islamabad. The Financial Action Task Force, for instance, has put Pakistan on notice with regard to the funding of terror.

We have been accused of sabotaging the process for talks with Pakistan. That is a complete lie. We believe that talks are the only rational means by which to settle even the most complex disputes. Accordingly, talks with Pakistan have been initiated many times. When they failed, it was only because of Pakistan's behaviour. There have been many Governments of numerous parties in India. Every Government has tried the peace option. By inviting the Heads of State of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to his swearing-in ceremony, Prime Minister Modi began his attempt for dialogue on his very first day in office. On 9 December 2016, I personally went to Islamabad and proposed a comprehensive bilateral dialogue. But soon afterwards, on 2 January, Pakistan-sponsored terrorists attacked our air force base in Pathankot. It is clear that we could not pursue talks in the middle of terrorist bloodshed. Even now, after the new Government in Pakistan came to power, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, wrote to Prime Minister Modi suggesting a meeting between our Foreign Ministers in New York. We even accepted the proposal but, within hours of our acceptance, news came that terrorists had killed three of our security personnel. Does that indicate a desire for dialogue? Could such a dialogue ever take place?

Time and again, Pakistan has accused India of human rights violations. Who is a greater transgressor of human rights than a terrorist? Those who take innocent lives in pursuit of war by other means are defenders of inhuman behaviour, not of human rights. Pakistan glorifies killers. It refuses to see the blood of innocent victims. It has become something of a habit for Pakistan to throw the dust of deceit and deception up against India in order to provide some thin cover for its own guilt.

The United Nations has seen that before. Last year, using her right of reply, the representative of Pakistan displayed some photographs as proof of alleged human rights violations by India (see A/72/PV.22). The photographs turned out to be from another country. Similar false accusations have become part of its standard rhetoric.

Each year, for the past five years, India has been arguing from this rostrum that lists are not enough if we want to check terrorists and their protectors. We need to bring them to accountability through international law. In 1996, India submitted a document with a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism at the United Nations. That draft remains a draft today only because we cannot agree on a common language. On the one hand, we want to fight terrorism; on the other, we cannot define it.

That has allowed terrorists with a price on their head to be celebrated in Pakistan as "freedom fighters". Their cruelty and barbarism are being advertised as heroism. The country of Pakistan prints postage stamps glorifying such terrorists. How long can we sit quietly and listen to such claims? If we do not act now, we will have to deal with that demon later on, when it sets fire to the entire world. Once again, I appeal to this body to come to an agreement on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism and to adopt it as one of the necessary measures in a long-running war.

I would now like to make some remarks regarding the United Nations. I began by highlighting its unique and positive role, but I must add that, step by slow step, the importance, influence, respect for and value of this institution are beginning to ebb. It is time to wonder whether we are wandering towards the fate of the League of Nations, which came to an end because it did not adopt the changes that were needed. It was unwilling to accept the need for reforms; we must not make that mistake. The United Nations must accept that it needs fundamental reform. Those reforms cannot be simply cosmetic; we need to change the institution's head and heart in order to make both compatible with the contemporary reality.

Reform must begin today; tomorrow could be too late. Are all of the challenges that confronted the United Nations at its founding still relevant today? I feel that, in the Security Council, now is the time to start making much-needed changes.

A subject that is often debated is multilateralism. The challenges we face are causing tensions in many countries. I should like to state that India believes that the world is one global family. The United Nations should therefore work as a family. How does a family work? It is shaped by love, not trade; it is nurtured by compassion, not jealousy; it functions by compromising, not by fighting. That is why the United Nations must be based on the principles of the family. It cannot be

run using "I", "me" and "mine"; this forum needs "we", "us" and "ours". Only then will it be sustainable.

India does not believe that only certain countries should be allowed to fulfil their goal or that we should take decisions on behalf of other countries that are not beneficial to them. We should take every country's goals into account.

This year, India will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth. Mahatma's favourite devotional hymn was "*Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye*" or "Call those people Vaishnavas who feel the pain of others". Its essence is that he who understands the pain of another and absorbs it as his own is a good human being. He who sees that pain and helps without becoming arrogant is a good human being.

We have to make the Assembly a platform for understanding, assistance and true justice. We have to understand the pain of other nations and work with developed nations to ease and eliminate their pain. Arrogance has no place in our scheme of things; arrogance is counter-productive and self-defeating. Let us work for the benefit of the less fortunate and towards a world that is free from terrorism, tension and violence. That is the universe we envisage.

It is with that wish in mind that I end with a Sanskrit *shloka* or song: May all experience well-being; may all experience peace; may all move towards perfection; may all enjoy prosperity; may all achieve serenity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, and your country, Ecuador, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish you every success. I would also like to thank your predecessor for his role in steering the work of the Assembly during the previous session. I thank as well the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his efforts pursuant to the Charter.

Every year we come to this important international forum carrying hopes and wishes that every place in this world will have become more secure, stable and prosperous. Today, our hope is greater than ever, as we are confident that the will of the people will eventually triumph. Our hope and confidence are the result of more than seven years of hardship during which our people have suffered from the scourge of terrorism. However, Syrians have refused to compromise and succumb to terrorist groups and their external supporters. They have stood their ground and remained defiant, fully convinced that their struggle is a battle for their existence, their history and their future, from which they will ultimately emerge victorious.

To the disappointment of some, we are here today, more than seven years into the dirty war against my country, to announce to the world that the situation on the ground has become more secure and stable, and that our battle against terrorism is almost over. That is true thanks to the heroism, resolve and unity of the Syrian people and the army, and to the support of our allies and friends. Despite those achievements, we are determined to continue the sacred battle until we purge all Syrian territories of terrorist groups, regardless of their names, and any illegal foreign presence. We will pay no heed to any aggression or external pressure on us, or to any lies or allegations that seek to discourage us. That is our duty and a non-negotiable right that we have exercised as we eradicated terrorism from most of the Syrian territories.

The Governments of certain countries have denied us our right under international law and our national duty to combat terrorism and protect our people on our land and within our own borders. At the same time, those Governments have founded an illegitimate international coalition led by the United States under the pretext of combating terrorism in Syria. However, that coalition has done everything but fight terrorism. It has even proved that the coalition's goals were in line with those of terrorist groups, namely, spreading chaos, killing and destruction. The coalition destroyed the Syrian city of Raqqa, destroyed infrastructure and public services in targeted areas and massacred civilians, including children and women, all of which constitute war crimes under international law.

On the other hand, the coalition has provided direct military support to terrorists on multiple occasions as they fought against the Syrian army. It should have been more aptly named the coalition to support terrorists and commit war crimes.

The situation and its dimensions in Syria cannot be divorced from the conflict raging between two axes on the world stage. One axis promotes peace, stability and prosperity across the world, advocates

for a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding, respects international law and upholds the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States. The other axis tries to spread chaos in international relations and insists on employing colonization and hegemony as tools to further its narrow interests, even if that means resorting to dirty methods such as supporting terrorism and imposing economic blockades in order to subjugate peoples and Governments that reject external dictates and insist on making their own independent national decisions.

What happened in Syria should have been a lesson to those countries, but they refuse to learn. That is why we, the Members of this Organization, must make clear and unequivocal choices. Are we going to defend international law and the Charter of the United Nations and be on the side of justice? Or are we going to succumb to hegemonic tendencies and the law of the jungle that some are trying to impose on this Organization and the world?

Today, the situation on the ground is more stable and secure thanks to the progress made in combating terrorism. The Syrian Government continues to rehabilitate the areas destroyed by terrorists and restore normal life. All conditions are now present for the voluntary return of Syrian refugees to the country that they had to leave because of terrorism and the unilateral economic measures that targeted their daily lives and their livelihoods. It is true that thousands of Syrian refugees living abroad have started to return home. From this rostrum, I would like to stress that the return of each and every Syrian refugee is a priority for the Syrian State. Doors are wide open for all Syrians abroad to return voluntarily and safely. I underline that that applies to Syrians inside Syria also applies to Syrians abroad. Everyone is under the law.

Thanks to the help from the Government of the Russian Federation, the Syrian Government will spare no effort to facilitate the return of those refugees and meet their basic needs. Therefore, a special coordination body has been established to coordinate the return of refugees to their places of origin in Syria and to enable them to rebuild their normal lives. Although we have called upon the international community and humanitarian organizations to facilitate the return of refugees, some Western countries — as a complement to the dirty role they have played since the start of the war in Syria — continue to obstruct the return of those Syrian refugees to their country. They are spreading fears among refugees under false pretexts and politicizing that purely humanitarian issue, using it as a bargaining chip to serve their political agenda and linking the return of refugees to the political process.

Today, as we are about to close the last chapter of the Syrian crisis, Syrians are determined to come together, erase the traces of that terrorist war and rebuild their country with their own hands and experience. That applies to those who stayed in Syria and to those who were forced to leave as a result of terrorist acts. We welcome all of the initiatives of States and parties that did not engage in the aggression against Syria and were clear and explicit in rejecting terrorism to help the Syrian Government in the reconstruction process. We underscore once again that the friendly countries that stood by our side against terrorism have priority in participating in the reconstruction programmes. As for the countries that offer only conditional assistance to engage in the reconstruction process or continue to support terrorism, they are basically neither invited nor welcome.

In parallel with achieving progress against terrorism, as well as in reconstruction and the return of refugees, we are keen to advance the political process while maintaining our constant principles, namely, to preserve the sovereignty, independence and unity of the territory and people of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian people have the exclusive right to determine the future of their country without any external interference and free of terrorism in the Syrian territories.

Based on those constant principles, we have expressed time and again our readiness to respond to any initiative that could help Syrians to end the crisis. We have engaged positively and openly in the Geneva talks, the Astana process and the intra-Syrian national dialogue in Sochi. However, it has always been the other parties that have set obstacles, rejected dialogue and resorted to terrorism and foreign interference.

Nevertheless, we continue to adopt a positive attitude towards the outcomes of the Syrian national dialogue in Sochi on the formation of a committee to review the current constitution. We have presented a practical and comprehensive vision on the composition, prerogatives and working methods of that committee, and submitted a list of representatives on behalf of the Syrian State. We stress that the mandate of the committee is limited to reviewing the articles of the current Constitution through a Syrian-led and Syrian-

owned process that may be facilitated by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We also stress that no preconditions or foregone conclusions should be imposed on the committee and its recommendations. The committee must be independent, given that the Constitution and anything relating to it is a Syrian matter to be decided by Syrians themselves. We will not, therefore, accept any proposal that constitutes interference in the internal affairs of Syria or might lead to such interference. We underscore that the Syrian people must have the final word regarding any constitutional or other matter relating to sovereignty. We also reaffirm our readiness to work actively with countries friendly to the Syrian Government to launch the work of the committee along the bases and parameters that I have just mentioned.

In conjunction with the international initiatives that I have referred to, local national reconciliation is well under way. Reconciliation agreements have stopped the bloodshed and prevented destruction in many Syrian areas. They have restored stability and normal life to those areas, allowing their people to return to the homes that they were forced to leave because of terrorism. Reconciliation will therefore remain our priority and our focus.

The battle we have fought in Syria against terrorism has not only been a military one; it has also been a battle between the culture of destruction, extremism and death and the culture of construction, tolerance and life. I therefore appeal from this rostrum to the international community to fight the ideology of terrorism and violent extremism and prevent it from getting support and financial resources, and to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, notably resolution 2253 (2015). The military battle against terrorism, while important, is not enough. Terrorism is like an epidemic: it will return, break out and threaten everyone without exception.

We fully condemn and reject the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances, wherever or whenever it occurs and regardless of the target. That is why Syria completely eliminated its chemical programme and fulfilled all its commitments to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as confirmed by numerous OPCW reports.

Although some Western countries are constantly trying to politicize that organization's work, we have always cooperated with the OPCW to the fullest extent possible. Unfortunately, every time we express our readiness to receive objective and professional investigative teams to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons, those countries have blocked such efforts because they know that the conclusions of the investigations would not satisfy them given the ill intentions they harbour against Syria. Those countries have ready-made accusations and scenarios to justify aggression against Syria. That was the case when the United States, France and Britain launched a wanton tripartite aggression on Syria last April, claiming that chemical weapons had been used, but without any investigation or evidence and in flagrant violation of Syria's sovereignty, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, those same countries have disregarded all of the reliable information that we have provided on chemical weapons in the possession of terrorist groups that were used by them on multiple occasions with a view to casting blame on the Syrian Government and justifying a predetermined attack against it. The terrorist organization known as the White Helmets was the main tool used to mislead public opinion, fabricate accusations and come up with lies regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The White Helmets organization was created by British intelligence under a humanitarian cover. It has been proved, however, that that organization is part of the Al-Nusra Front, which is affiliated with Al-Qaida. Despite all those allegations, we remain determined to liberate every inch of our territory without concern for the black banners of terrorists or the theatrics of the White Helmets.

In another episode of the terrorist war on Syria since 2011, brutal suicide bombings in July orchestrated by Da'esh rocked the province of Al-Suwayda in southern Syria. It is worth noting that the terrorists behind that attack came from the Al-Tanf area, where United States forces are present. That area has become a safe haven for remnant groups of Da'esh gunmen, who are now hiding in the Rukban refugee camp on the border with Jordan under the protection and sponsorship of United States forces present in the area. In line with its investment in terrorism aimed at prolonging the crisis in Syria, the United States has also sought to release terrorists from Guantanamo prison and send them to Syria, where they

have become the effective leaders of the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups.

Meanwhile, the Turkish regime continues to support terrorists in Syria. Since day one of the war on Syria, the Turkish regime has trained and armed terrorists, turning Turkey into a hub and a corridor for terrorists on their way to Syria. When those terrorists failed to serve its agenda, the Turkish regime resorted to direct aggression by attacking many cities and towns in northern Syria. However, all actions that seek to undermine Syria's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and that violate international law will not stop us from exercising our right and duty to recover all our land and purge it of terrorists, whether through military action or local reconciliation agreements.

Based on the aforementioned, we have always welcomed any initiative that prevents further Syrian bloodshed and restores security and safety to areas affected by terrorism. That is why we welcomed the agreement on Idlib reached in Sochi on 17 September. That agreement was the result of intensive consultations and full coordination between Syria and Russia. We underscore that that agreement is time-bound and includes specific deadlines. It complements the agreements previously reached in Astana on the de-escalation zones. We hope that, when the agreement is implemented, the Al-Nusra Front and other terrorist groups will be eradicated, thereby eliminating the last remnants of terrorism on the Syrian territories.

Any foreign presence on Syrian territories without the consent of the Syrian Government is illegal and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It is an assault on our national sovereignty and undermines counter-terrorism efforts and threatens regional peace and security. We therefore consider that any forces operating on Syrian territories without a request from the Syrian Government — including United States, French and Turkish forces — are occupying forces, which will be dealt with accordingly. They must withdraw immediately and unconditionally.

Israel continues to occupy a cherished part of our land in the Syrian Golan, and our people there continue to suffer because of Israel's oppressive and aggressive policies. Israel has even supported terrorist groups that have operated in southern Syria, protecting them through direct military intervention and launching repeated attacks on Syrian land. However, just as we liberated southern Syria from terrorists, we are determined to fully restore the occupied Syrian Golan along the lines of 4 June 1967. Syria demands that the international community effectively put an end to all such Israeli practices and compel Israel to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, notably resolution 497 (1981), on the occupied Syrian Golan.

The international community must also help the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and facilitate the return of Palestinian refugees to their land, pursuant to resolutions of international legitimacy. Any actions that undermine those rights are null and void and can only be rejected, as they threaten regional peace and security, especially the racist Israeli law known as the Nation-State Law and the decision of the United States Administration to move the American embassy to Jerusalem and to stop funding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Syria strongly condemns the decision of the United States Administration to withdraw from the nuclear agreement with Iran, which proves once again that Administration's disregard for and non-commitment to international treaties and conventions. We reiterate our full solidarity with the leaders and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and trust that they will overcome the effects of that irresponsible decision on the part of the United States Administration.

In the same context, we also stand with the Government and the people of Venezuela against the attempts by the United States to interfere in their internal affairs. We call once again for the lifting of the unilateral economic measures imposed on the Syrian people and all other independent peoples around the world, especially those of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba and Belarus.

In conclusion, I would like everyone to know that Syria, with the help of its allies and friends, will defeat terrorism. We must be treated accordingly. It is high time for some people to detach themselves from their state of separation from reality, abandon their illusions and come to understand that they will not achieve politically what they failed to achieve by war. We have never compromised on our national principles, even when the war was at its peak. We will surely not do so today.

At the same time, we want peace for the peoples of the world — that is the message we are sending — because we want peace for our people. We have never attacked others; we have never interfered in the affairs of others; and we have never exported terrorism to other parts of the world. We have always maintained the best relations with other countries. Today, as we seek to defeat terrorism, we continue to advocate dialogue and understanding, which serves the interests of our people and helps to achieve security, stability and prosperity for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ri Yong Ho, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Ri Yong Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I look forward to a successful outcome of the session under her able stewardship.

Peace and development is the common desire of our times and constitutes the main objective of the United Nations, defining all of its activities. Many countries around the world concentrate their efforts on achieving peace and development, but such efforts are still faced with serious challenges. During the past year, we have witnessed greater tension in overall international relations, with peace being threatened and development being deterred in many parts of the world owing to the "power does it all" attitude of unilateralism. Such a situation requires that the role of the United Nations be even further enhanced.

It is on the Korean peninsula that the most tangible trend towards peace and development was newly created this year. In April, Comrade Kim Jong Un, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, put forward a new strategic line of concentrating all efforts on socialist economic construction.

Since we have sufficiently consolidated our national defence capabilities and war deterrence so as to cope with the several-decades-long nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we now must concentrate all of our efforts on the historic task of building the economy. Our Government's policy line of focusing on the economy requires a peaceful environment above all else.

Comrade Chairman Kim Jong Un has actively participated in summit-level diplomatic activities with a firm determination to turn the Korean peninsula into a land of peace, free of both nuclear weapons and nuclear threats. He thereby made an important breakthrough in improving North-South relations and relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, as well as in revitalizing friendly and cooperative relations with neighbouring countries, thus marking a turning point and a dramatic easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula and the region as whole. Peace and security in the region will be consolidated and that, in turn, will lead to world peace and security — to the benefit of all States Members of the United Nations.

The fact that representatives of numerous countries have been unanimous in supporting and welcoming, from this rostrum, the current direction of developments on the Korean peninsula clearly shows that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's strategic choice and its sincere efforts to pursue that choice are fully aligned with the common interests and desires of the international community.

The key to consolidating peace and security on the Korean peninsula is to thoroughly implement the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Joint Statement, adopted in June at the historic bilateral summit held in Singapore. The Joint Statement contains all of the issues of principle regarding eventual solutions to the issues on the Korean peninsula, such as terminating the decades-long hostility between the two countries and establishing new relations between them, thus building a robust peace regime on the Korean peninsula, realizing the complete denuclearization of the peninsula and promoting humanitarian work between the two countries.

Once the Joint Statement has been implemented, the current trend towards détente will turn into durable peace, and the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula will also be achieved. As a result, the Korean peninsula, currently the most intense global hotspot, will become a cradle of peace and prosperity that contributes to security in Asia and the rest of the world.

The commitment of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the full implementation of the Joint Statement is unwavering. The

primary task in ensuring the effective implementation of the Statement must be to break down the barrier of mistrust between the two countries that has existed for several decades. To that end, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States should devote great efforts to building trust as a top priority. The implementation of previous agreements reached in various dialogues and negotiations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States ended in failure because the level of mistrust between them was too high and resulted in a general lack of confidence.

It is our position that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula should be achieved alongside the building of a peace regime, on the basis of the principle of simultaneous actions, step by step, starting with what we can do and prioritizing the building of trust. Out of the desire and resolute determination to successfully implement the Joint Statement, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is primarily focusing its efforts on building trust. Even before the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States summit, our Government took significant goodwill measures, such as stopping nuclear and intercontinental ballistic-missile tests, dismantling the nuclear test site in a transparent manner and committing not to transfer nuclear weapons or nuclear technology under any circumstances. We continue to make efforts to build trust.

However, we do not see any corresponding response from the United States. On the contrary, instead of addressing our concern about the lack of a peace regime on the Korean peninsula, the United States has insisted on denuclearization first and has increased the level of pressure through sanctions in order to achieve its purpose through coercion — even objecting to an end-of-war declaration. The perception that sanctions can bring us to our knees is a pipe dream of people who are ignorant about us. The problem is that the continued sanctions are deepening our mistrust. The reason behind the recent deadlock is that the United States relies on coercive methods that are lethal to trust-building.

The recent dramatic improvement in North-South relations and the atmosphere of cooperation clearly show how decisive the role of trust-building can be. In less than five months, the leaders of the North and the South met three times. Through their meetings and talks they have been building the trust in one another that is necessary to resolve the various issues in North-South relations in a constructive manner, and this has been translated into tangible results.

As demonstrated by the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018, which was jointly announced by the leaders of the North and the South on 19 September, dialogue between the two countries in many areas — including politics, the military, humanitarian work, sports, culture and economic cooperation — is very active, and there is an unprecedented atmosphere of reconciliation and cooperation. Many noteworthy outcomes can be seen, and the process enjoys the support of and is welcomed by the entire Korean nation and the international community. If South Korea had been the party involved in the issue of denuclearization instead of the United States, the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula would not be at such a deadlock.

That is why we attach great importance to building confidence between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States for the implementation of the Joint Statement. Without trust in the United States, we can have no confidence with regard to our national security, and, under those circumstances, there is no way that we will unilaterally disarm first. The commitment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to denuclearization is firm. However, it will be possible only if the United States sufficiently earns our trust.

There are pessimistic views on the implementation of the Joint Statement inside the United States, but that is not due to any flaw in the Statement itself. Rather, it is because of the domestic politics of the United States. The political opposition there, with the sole purpose of attacking its political opponent, makes it its daily business to slander the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, claiming that we cannot be trusted. That opposition is forcing the Administration to make unreasonable unilateral demands on us, thus impeding the smooth progress of dialogue and negotiations. Fuelling mistrust of a dialogue partner while relying only on coercive methods is not at all helpful in building trust; on the contrary, it only increases mistrust.

On the topic of reasons to distrust each other, it is we who have far more reasons to distrust the United States. First, the United States acquired nuclear weapons before we did and is the only country that has actually used them in war. From the very first day of our Republic, 70 years ago, the United States has maintained a hostile policy against our country and

has imposed a total economic blockade on us, ensuring that United States companies cannot trade even a single screwnail with our country. Even though we have not thrown so much as a pebble onto United States soil, during the Korean War the United States threatened to drop dozens of atomic bombs on our country. Even after that, the United States kept positioning strategic nuclear arsenals at our doorstep.

If both countries continue to harbour mistrust towards one other and to remain obsessed with the past, the recent Joint Statement cannot escape the same fate as all previous agreements between the two countries, namely, failure.

One part of the spirit of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States summit in Singapore was to free ourselves from old, conventional ways and to try an entirely new way of resolving the issues. At this critical juncture, the United States should use foresight and decide that the faithful fulfilment of the commitment that it made in Singapore will, in the end, be in its own national interest and should form the basis of a new method for improving relations between our two countries. Only then will the Joint Statement have positive prospects. If the Joint Statement falls victim to American internal politics, the main victim of the subsequent unpredictable consequences will be the United States.

Improving bilateral relations and resolving issues on the Korean peninsula is key to achieving the theme of this session: "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Our new policy of concentrating all efforts on building our economy is the right political choice, not only for improving the lives of our people but also for realizing the common aspirations of people around the world — peace and development.

The international community should support and encourage our efforts to focus on building the economy in response to the bold decisions and goodwill measures that we have taken for the easing of tension and the maintenance of lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. The implementation of the Joint Statement is a shared responsibility of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. The United Nations also plays a key role.

The Security Council, which was once so eager to express its concern about the tense situation on the Korean peninsula, has recently been silent about the valuable momentum for peace that we have achieved this year. That is quite strange. The Council rained down numerous sanctions resolutions on us, taking issue with our nuclear tests and missile test launches. But now, a full year after such tests were stopped, not a word in those resolutions has changed, to say nothing of completely removing or easing sanctions. Worse still, the Council is taking a very worrying stand by rejecting the proposal of some of its member States to issue a presidential statement that welcomes the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States summit and the Joint Statement.

The United Nations Command in South Korea even showed alarming signs of hindering the implementation of the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, reached between the North and the South. As for the United Nations Command, it is merely a command of the allied forces beyond the control of the United Nations and only obeys the orders of the United States, yet still misuses the sacred name of the Organization.

Based on the mission of the Organization as defined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization, and especially the Security Council, has the responsibility and duty to support and welcome developments that help to ensure international peace and security. The United Nations should really apply the theme of this session to its actual activities and thus rid itself, as soon as possible, of the stigma of the feeling that the Security Council equals the United States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelkader Messahel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Messahel (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my warm and fraternal congratulations to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her outstanding election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Her vast experience in international political affairs will undoubtedly contribute greatly to the successful conduct of the work of the Assembly. In our capacity as Vice-President elected by the Assembly, we assure her of our full support in carrying out her noble task.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his dedicated commitment in the way he managed the previous session. I am also deeply grateful to Secretary-General

António Guterres for his enlightened leadership and for his laudable initiatives since he assumed his post. His efforts are aimed at giving renewed impetus to our Organization, particularly in the essential domains pertaining to international peace, security and development.

It is highly regrettable that the entire world continues to experience an unprecedented and multifaceted crisis; the Secretary-General was right in warning about the risks that that entails. He rightly warned that conflicts had worsened and that new dangers are emerging (see A/73/PV.6). Global concerns related to nuclear weapons have not reached the current level since the Second World War. Environmental imbalances are occurring faster than our responses can deal with them, and the gap resulting from the current differences is growing wider, while gross human rights violations are taking place and nationalism and xenophobia are on the rise.

In the context of the advanced and inevitable growth in globalization that we face, the seriousness of those colossal challenges, both old and new, are aggravated by the perverse effects of the continuing economic and financial crisis. Against that backdrop, which has become even more alarming owing to the recent appearance of unilateral and protectionist trends, we must have the courage to recognize the inadequacy and futility of the policies that have been implemented to date and the structural deficiencies of the increasingly ineffective global governance architecture.

When he acceded to the presidency of the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika warned that membership in the United Nations was not enough to protect nations against hunger and insecurity (see A/PV.2233). Today, we can no longer accept the perpetuation of an international order that does not encourage the international values of peace, justice and development, as well as science and technology, while contributing to improving living conditions. That order has concentrated economic and financial resources in the hands of a small minority, widening the existing gap that separates the richest from the poorest countries and peoples. The unfortunate conclusion is that we are facing a real moral crisis.

I would like to commend the rightness and appropriateness of the theme chosen for our session. Indeed, now more than ever, the United Nations must find ways and means that enable it to fully play the role that its founding fathers envisioned for it following the devastation of a global confrontation. Such a vital objective for the entire international community cannot be achieved without a renewed collective commitment to effective and real multilateralism, in harmony with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations — a commitment to which the former Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan, a worthy son of Africa and a committed citizen of the world, dedicated his life and with which he associated his name. While the United Nations remains the distinctive forum for dialogue and cooperation among the nations of the world, it must also bring about the desired change.

In our view, the genuine change that we seek and which is of the utmost priority requires us to mobilize all our capabilities and efforts with a view to reforming the United Nations itself. It is imperative that the reform should involve both the structures and the operating methods of the Organization, particularly the Security Council, by paying particular attention in the first place to redressing the historical injustice done to the African continent in terms of its underrepresentation in both membership categories of that body. The reform must also include the revitalization of the role of the General Assembly and the strengthening of its authority — a necessity around which there is, fortunately, a growing consensus.

Conscious of our responsibilities and contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security and with full respect for the cardinal principles of our foreign policy, Algeria follows with particular interest the crises and conflicts facing the countries in our region. While continuing to fully play our role to the best of our ability, my country reiterates its conviction, on the basis of our own experience, that conflicts cannot be totally resolved without promoting solutions that are owned by the parties concerned and reached through inclusive dialogue and that place national interests above all other considerations, thereby preserving the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States. Whether related to the situations in Mali, Libya, Syria or Yemen, only such an approach can enable those sisterly countries to restore peace and stability so that they may begin their rebuilding process.

With regard to the Western Sahara issue, which comes before the United Nations as an issue of decolonization, Algeria believes that its settlement can be achieved only by allowing the people of the Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable and non-assignable right to self-determination.

My country reiterates its firm support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara and expresses the hope that their actions, together with the input of the African Union, will contribute to the resumption of negotiations without preconditions and in good faith between the two parties to the conflict, namely, the Kingdom of Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable political solution that ensures the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

In the same vein, Algeria is convinced that only a solution based on international legitimacy and the recognition of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, can put a definitive end to the conflict that has existed in the Middle East for seven decades.

Terrorism, of which Algeria was the first target at the end of the last century, has now become one of the most destructive scourges on the planet. At the cost of heavy sacrifices, my country was able to confront it alone by adopting an approach and by harnessing methods that have proved to be effective. That experience, which we are willing to share, was based on the conviction that addressing terrorism must imperatively tackle its root causes and must be accompanied by a policy that is resolute against violent extremism.

The international community is particularly called upon to ensure that the fight against terrorism is accompanied by measures to fight extremism and the promotion of policies that advocate coexistence. In that context, I am pleased to recall that the United Nations resolution declaring 16 May as the International Day of Living Together in Peace (resolution 72/130), which was initiated by Algeria, is part of the efforts to promote the principle of an inclusive dialogue leading the quest for solutions to the challenges to stability at both the national and the international levels.

We are proud that the values and principles of living together in peace were the basis of the policy of civil harmony and national reconciliation, which was implemented with determination by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of the Republic of Algeria in order to end the national tragedy and reconcile Algerians with each other.

Those unifying ideals are considered above all to be the common factor among the strategies, policies and programmes that were implemented in the various economic, social, educational, cultural and religious fields. Those same principles consistently guide my country's foreign policy in our relations with neighbouring countries and other countries of the world.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development are remarkable achievements that require the substantial mobilization of both the means and the capabilities for their implementation. We express the hope that the outcome of the High-level Meeting on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September, will provide a solid foundation for concerted action between the United Nations system and Member States for development in line with the aspirations of developing countries, as advocated by the Group of 77.

Algeria, which participated actively in the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is about to finalize its national progress report for 2016-2018 on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, for voluntary submission to the Economic and Social Council in July 2019. That is part of the new development agenda adopted by Algeria in 2016. It is a policy that aims to place Algeria among emerging countries by 2035, enabling it to diversify and transform its economy through the revival and consolidation of its economic growth. That will benefit all its citizens, as well as countries of the region as a whole.

Before concluding, I cannot but commend the efforts made by our national authorities regarding the recent constitutional review, which seeks to benefit all segments of Algerian society, in particular the rights of women and supporting them to be independent, as well as support for young people in order to ensure their effective integration into the country's economic and social development process. Those efforts have earned the recognition of the international community for their focus on promoting both human rights and stability and security. We are honoured by such acknowledgements and feel reassured in our global approach.

The rejection of policies based on force, with the dangers that they entail, requires that we constantly seek, through dialogue and consensus, to strengthen multilateral action. In our view, that is the best way

to respond to the global security and development challenges facing the nations and countries of the world. Through its focus on demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness for which everyone yearns, the United Nations plays a central role in the endeavour to restore the respect owed to it.

The success of the United Nations is a success for all. We must work to make it a forum not only for discussing our differences but also for resolving them. Our Organization should be the place where our partnerships are forged.

We particularly commend the General Assembly's unanimous acceptance of the concept of living together in peace. Algeria believes that failure to live in peace is not inevitable. Conflicts, human tragedies, terrorism and environmental disasters do not affect only certain people and not others. Destiny is a common thing, as President Bouteflika said.

We are called on to make the United Nations a unique means to serve peaceful and sustainable societies. Given our conviction and approach, Algeria will in all cases be a loyal and committed partner for achieving peace and development.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Yldiz Pollack-Beigle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Ms. Pollack-Beigle (Suriname): It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of my President, His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse. My country sincerely applauds the election of Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés as the first woman of the Latin American and Caribbean region to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. In the course of this session, the membership stands to gain greatly from her outstanding personal qualities and wealth of experience as a professional diplomat at the helm of our General Assembly. Suriname pledges its unwavering support for her efforts to make our Organization relevant again for the entire global community, in particular the disadvantaged and the marginalized, including women and young people.

As we remember the legacy of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, we honour his tireless efforts to make the world more peaceful and humane by fighting against inequality and injustice, combating diseases and resolving conflicts with all of the means at our disposal, while making the United Nations the focal point of multilateralism.

As honoured as I am to address this gathering that brings together so many world leaders, I am also disheartened by the sombre tone expressed by Secretary-General Guterres in the presentation of his annual report on the work of our Organization (A/73/1). As the Secretary-General noted, thetargets set last year have not been met. We have to ask ourselves if we will make the same appeals this year, with the same attitude of "business as usual" with regard to outcomes, whether or not they will be effective.

Suriname concurs with the assessment of the Secretary-General that the fundamental issue confronting the international community today is the lack of trust among nations. In that regard, as a small nation, my country firmly commits to upholding internationally accepted principles that clearly define who we are and provide for predictable actions in our international relations, thereby creating a climate of trust, understanding and respect. We underscore the need for a rules-based world order with the United Nations at the centre. That is required in order to create the necessary platform to address global concerns, including the mobilization of funds to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Being a low-lying coastal State, Suriname is among the most threatened countries directly impacted by sea-level rise. Approximately 80 per cent of our population resides in coastal areas, and our main production activities are also concentrated in that area, resulting in an existential threat. As we have witnessed in recent days, the forces of nature have struck once again — not only in our sister Caribbean nations but also elsewhere in the world. We are being urged to move beyond rhetoric and to take immediate action.

My country is strategically located on the Guiana Shield. My country has an abundance of natural resources, unique biodiversity and an impressive forest cover of more than 90 per cent. Moreover, our population, including indigenous peoples, tribal communities of African descent and various other ethnic groups, descends from all the continents of the world. All express and enjoy exceptional tolerance, religious freedom and respect for one another's cultures and backgrounds and are equally entitled in terms of access to social programmes, including health care and education. We have used that diversity, inherited from

our colonial past, to our advantage by rejecting the divide-and-rule of yesteryear. We are indeed proud that our people, coming from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, can live in peace and harmony with one another, forging bonds conducive to nation-building and working towards the well-being of all citizens — both young and old.

With regard to our economic challenges and policy measures, my country, as a commodity-based export economy, is highly vulnerable to commodity-price shocks. The sharp downturn in gold and oil prices three years ago and the closure of the century-old bauxite operation in 2016 have led to a sharp recession and a severe loss of Government revenue. The economy contracted by a combined 8 per cent, while the Government lost more than a third of its fiscal revenue in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). That required unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy adjustments in order to stabilize the exchange rate, reduce domestic demand and re-establish a viable balance of payments position. Our monetary authorities moved to a flexible exchange-rate regime and sharply curtailed credit creation in the country. Since October 2016, the exchange rate has been stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than 1 per cent, and there is no longer a current account deficit in the balance of payments.

The fiscal responses, usually a more difficult undertaking, began early in August 2015 with a massive contraction in Government expenditure and increases in taxation. While the crisis continued to erode revenue in terms of GDP, expenditure was cut from more than 30 per cent of GDP in 2015 to less than 23 per cent in 2017. As a result, the unsustainable deficit of 10 per cent of GDP that emerged during the crisis years has already been reduced to an estimated 5 per cent of GDP in 2018. Looking ahead, the Government also put in place significant reforms to limit the impact of future export-commodity shocks. Institutional reforms will help to promote foreign direct investment aimed at diversifying our economy, moving it away from its heavy reliance on extractive industries. Fiscal reforms aimed at reducing reliance on direct tax income and broadening the tax base are at the top of our priorities. The establishment of a sovereign wealth fund will stabilize income derived from the extractive industries and help to mitigate the fiscal impact of future shocks. The International Monetary Fund and international rating agencies have commended those efforts and predict a continued improvement in the macroeconomic performance of Suriname.

Our efforts have indeed borne fruit, and the Government is committed to continuing fiscal policies aimed at restoring the primary fiscal surplus. Those efforts to steer us on the right path towards development are hampered by obstacles that are unjustifiable and not of our making. First of all, I would like to mention the matter of Suriname's classification as a middle-income country — an issue to which I alluded from this very rostrum last year (see A/72/PV.21) but which remains unresolved. Our classification, like that of many other developing countries, including those in the Caribbean, is based on GDP per capita, which does not reflect our vulnerabilities. We strongly reject that unrealistic classification, which disregards various factors and creates great challenges for us. It is a matter that should be addressed with urgency. Access to concessional financing for our development is critical to the implementation of programmes that benefit all our citizens. Correspondent banking and de-risking, further aggravated by unilateral actions, including blacklisting and the arbitrary seizure of funds, without due regard for the severe consequences to the community, including businessmen and families, remain obstacles over which we have no influence. An atmosphere of trust and political will is crucial and should lead to dialogue and cooperation in order to address all matters of concern.

Although Suriname contributes significantly to the mitigation of the effects of climate change through its high level of forest cover and low deforestation rate, regrettably, we must acknowledge that global commitments, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, have yet to materialize in the form of tangible results. Suriname is one of 11 countries with a high level of forest cover and a low deforestation rate, representing 20 per cent of the Earth's remaining tropical forests and storing 18 per cent of tropical forest carbon. Yet we are not able to fully benefit from global arrangements associated with sound forest management. At the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last year, Suriname pledged to maintain its forest coverage at 93 per cent. We also made the conditional commitment to sustain our leadership position as one of the most carbon-negative countries. That pledge, subject to scientific, technological, technical and financial

support, extends beyond national benefits into the realm of global gains for humankind. It is against the backdrop of that reality that Suriname will host a high-level conference on climate finance mobilization in February 2019. The conference will seek to initiate and implement new economic models of ecosustainability aimed at improving the quality of life for all.

The scourges of illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and terrorism, as well as trafficking in arms and persons, place an unprecedented burden on the financial and human-resource capacity of small developing countries, hampering their ability to implement policy measures aimed at achieving development objectives. Drug abuse and drug trafficking destroy families, disrupt communities and rob our youth of a productive future. Our open borders compel us to strengthen cooperation with adjacent, neighbouring and other countries in order to effectively combat transnational organized crime and its negative consequences. Such cooperation must yield results, and we will join others in the fight against the world drug problem. We need more than lip service today. We need to join one another in taking action Likewise, we solicit international cooperation to protect our unique biodiversity, which is under threat, owing to illegal poaching and trade in endangered species.

With regard to our collaboration at the bilateral, subregional and multilateral levels, Suriname continues to stand for international peace and security. We advocate for dialogue in the resolution of any existing conflict and uphold the internationally accepted principles of non-interference, non-intervention and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Suriname respects and protects all human rights. However, we strongly reject using human rights for political gains. All conflicts that arise are a consequence of departing from those valued principles. That is why I would like to reiterate that those valued principles form the bedrock of Suriname's foreign policy. In the same vein, my country applauds those who have chosen the path of dialogue to resolve their disputes. In that regard, allow me to mention the rapprochement between countries in the Horn of Africa and on the Korean peninsula.

Our geographic location positions us as a strategic hub. As such, Suriname has strengthened its bonds with neighbouring and adjacent countries and with those with whom we enjoy remarkable historic ties. As we strengthen partnerships based on mutual respect and benefit, we seek to advance our national development objectives with a focus on agriculture and tourism through foreign direct investments, South-South cooperation and regional partnerships. Suriname, with its human capital as its greatest asset and an abundance of natural resources, such as fresh water, oil, gold, bauxite and other minerals, maintains warm and friendly relations with many countries. We focus on reinforcing existing partnerships and initiating new ones. As a result, many friends from all corners of the world are seeking to forge durable partnerships, based on mutual respect and benefit.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has not been spared from tensions resulting from existing differences of opinion on various issues. The 2014 Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace has certainly contributed to ensuring that there is no room for military adventures. We strongly appeal for dialogue where there are differences. We must prevent outside forces from imposing their agenda on us, which run counter to our own interests as a region. Let us focus on what binds us and not on what divides us. It is reprehensible that some economically powerful countries resort to applying unilateral sanctions when they encounter ideological and political differences. Such economic warfare does not augur well for solving disputes. On the contrary, positions are hardened with far-reaching consequences for regional and international stability, peace and security. Suriname strongly rejects such coercive economic and trade measures, as they are counterproductive and create an atmosphere of distrust, rendering the peaceful resolution of disputes practically impossible. In that regard, we disapprove of the continuation of the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba and its people. Time and again, the majority of nations has taken a stand against that embargo. Is it not now time to honour the demand of the majority of the international community and end the blockade?

The current arms race is deplorable and consumes tremendous amounts of resources. Imagine what we could have achieved in terms of making the world more humane if those resources had been channelled into combating disease and hunger and improving food safety and security. Who would not aspire to those sustainable goals? Like many other countries, Suriname calls for an end to the arms race, while also rejecting the militarization of outer space and research in the area of artificial intelligence for warfare purposes.

Multilateralism remains essential for undertaking joint actions aimed at achieving sustainable development and addressing matters of global concern, such as maintaining peace and security, combating terrorism and transnational organized crime and addressing the issue of climate change. Suriname supports those initiatives, as we seek to reinforce the validity of multilateralism based on the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

We are convinced that the United Nations remains the most important body for discussing all matters concerning the international community, with the aim of finding solutions and taking into consideration the interests of Member States. It is therefore essential to make this institution more relevant by making it more democratic, transparent and accountable. Continued efforts to reform the United Nations remain crucial if we wish to reflect the realities of today's world. For example, the process to reform the Security Council must be comprehensive, inclusive, balanced and consensus-based, while taking into account the interests of both developed and developing countries and further promoting, preserving and strengthening international peace and security.

The President's priorities for the seventy-third session have been noted, and Suriname is fully supportive, as we work together to make the Organization relevant once again. We have to ensure that our youth is engaged and participates in a structured manner in the affairs of this world body, recognizing the fact that they are unique and innovative in their own way. As lead head in the Caribbean Community for youth development, Suriname wholeheartedly supports the views expressed earlier in the debate advocating for the creation of a United Nations agency dealing with youth. I expect that the recently launched United Nations Youth Strategy will be inclusive and deliver on the aspirations of the world's young people.

In the final analysis, when Suriname speaks, we speak to give strength to the voices of all nations, whether small or big, developed or developing. We must globally recommit to the principle of dialogue and the cause of lasting peace. That recommitment, which I call on all of us to embrace, is the inherent right to a decent life and protection for all who are born on this planet. Through our Organization, we have at our disposal all the means needed to take on that responsibility. We have no one but ourselves do that for us.

Let me conclude by saying that, if there were no United Nations, today we would be calling for its creation. Therefore, as I said before, let us decide to focus on what binds us rather than on what divides us.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Balakrishnan (Singapore): It is a bright and sunny Saturday morning outside. I thank members for sacrificing their time to participate in this debate. I add my voice to those who congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés of Ecuador on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I also thank my friend Miroslav Lajčák, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, for his sterling leadership of the seventy-second session.

The one word that we have probably heard the most over this past week is "multilateralism". Multilateralism is at a crossroads. In fact, it is facing a significant threat. In recent years, we have witnessed a crisis of confidence in the concept of multilateralism and its institutions. Whether in trade, security or dispute resolution, questions have arisen about whether the multilateral system can continue to deliver effective solutions for the multitude of problems that we face. I stand here as a representative of a tiny, open and trade-dependent city State, and Singapore has witnessed this recent retreat from multilateralism with grave concern. That is why today I want to raise my voice in defence of multilateralism. There is perhaps no better forum for me to do so than the United Nations, the ultimate bastion of multilateralism.

It is actually easy to understand why there is a resurgence in isolationist, protectionist and even xenophobic sentiments in the political arena all over the world. We are living in uncertain, volatile and disruptive times. The digital revolution is increasingly disrupting the way we live, work, play, communicate, organize and mobilize our societies. Non-State actors and transboundary threats, terrorism, pandemics and climate change remain a clear and present danger. Frontier issues such as artificial intelligence and cybercrime have leapt from the pages of science fiction into our daily lives. Our social cohesion is breaking down, and all too often we operate in isolated social and political bubbles.

At the same time, the international order as we know it is being disrupted. Since 1945, many countries and

regions have benefited from the open global system — a world order that was substantially underwritten by a single Power: the United States of America. But today we are transitioning to a multipolar world, where other Powers are quite rightly beginning to assume a greater role in multiple spheres. That is a transition that has to be managed carefully and delicately.

I am not saying that multilateralism is perfect. In fact, we recognize that it has not always fulfilled all its promises. And, quite frankly, sometimes it has been oversold as a panacea. How then do we make multilateralism work in this rapidly shifting geostrategic context? My take is that every State has to make room to accommodate the new realities and find a new modus vivendi. Foreign policy and trade policy actually always begin at home. Politics is always local. We need to achieve a rebalancing in our domestic societies and political spheres, as well as in the global, international sphere. The global order will need to evolve. Our responsibilities will need to be rebalanced. In this perilous period of transition, we cannot and should not abandon the rules-based world order that has brought about unprecedented peace and prosperity for 70 years.

In fact, the scale and transboundary nature of the challenges that we face today demand more cohesion and cooperation, not less. There is a strong case to be made for doubling down on multilateralism, rather than retreating from it. We need a clear framework of rules and norms so as to ensure predictability and stability in inter-State relations and commerce. Defining those rules through a multilateral process in which all States engage with one another as equals is necessary in order to build consensus and to strengthen respect for the rule of law.

Compliance with the agreed rules by all States is not only essential for global stability and for governing the global commons, it is especially crucial for a small city-State like Singapore. The principle that agreements should be respected and implemented is fundamental for our survival. Without the rule of international law the strong do what they will, and the weak will suffer what we must.

For small States like Singapore, we cannot survive in such a world. That is why Singapore has always been a staunch defender of the United Nations, international law and the multilateral system. Let us take trade, for example. Globalization has actually not benefited everyone equally. There remain pockets of poverty and hunger in our world. Our people are worried about jobs. Unfortunately, the conventional arguments in favour of free trade, economic integration, and cooperation between countries have gone out of fashion.

Today, trade frictions between the United States and China have raised the spectre of a trade war. But we cannot simply blame globalization. All Governments of today have an obligation to consider long-term and sustainable solutions, instead of just raising trade barriers. For example, in order to truly address widening inequality and wage stagnation we must address the root causes. In the midst of the digital revolution, we must ensure that our people have the right skills for new emerging jobs. It is futile to fight to protect obsolete technologies and to squabble over yesterday's jobs. On the contrary, we must try to take advantage of the new opportunities of the global market to create the jobs of the future.

It is therefore our responsibility, as Governments, to actively put in place policies to train, retrain, retool and reskill our citizens by investing in infrastructure, training and education. That is why we in Singapore are working so hard to restructure our education system. We are putting in serious money to enable our people to continuously upgrade and learn new skills through a programme we call SkillsFuture. The emphasis is on the word "future". Right now, in Singapore our focus is on restructuring our economy, identifying and working with the private sector to transform jobs, enhance our competitiveness and elevate productivity across the board. That is fundamentally an investment in our people to make sure that all of us are ready for the future.

Ultimately, no country benefits from trade conflicts and protectionism. The negative impacts will ripple through the global supply chain and will undermine growth and prosperity in all countries. We will all be worse off. At this time of increasing interconnectedness and interdependence we need a multilateral approach and strong rules, now more than ever. Singapore will continue to be a strong and staunch supporter of the rules-based multilateral trading system. The critical importance of the World Trade Organization cannot be overemphasized: it is the ultimate neutral arbiter of international trade disputes.

Another area where we urgently need to promote the adoption and implementation of rules and norms is

in cyberspace. To reap the full benefits of the digital revolution, we must develop a trusted, open and inclusive cyberspace underpinned by international law and well-defined norms of responsible State behaviour. The International Telecommunication Union has ranked Singapore as the country most committed to cybersecurity in 2017. Yet, in July this year, we discovered that one of Singapore's major health databases had been subjected to an advanced persistent threat. That was a deliberate, targeted and sophisticated cyberattack. No country is immune to such attacks. But all of us need to work together to prevent them. We need to implement norms and rules that will prohibit such attacks on critical infrastructure, particularly where lives are at stake.

States have always turned to the United Nations as the only universal, inclusive, multilateral forum that can develop the rules that govern the global commons. One example is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which provides the global legal framework for all activities in the oceans and seas, which we depend on for trade, food and resources. Just as Singapore strongly supported the UNCLOS process in the past, Singapore stands ready now to contribute to the United Nations work aimed at developing and adopting norms and rules on cybersecurity. That is simply another example of the global commons, and we cannot allow the tragedy of the commons to occur in cyberspace, in the sea or in the area of climate change.

To that end, we support the reconvening of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security and the continuation of its work in developing the norms for States' behaviour in cyberspace. Cybersecurity has been a priority under Singapore's chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At the third ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity, which was held in Singapore just last week, all 10 ASEAN member States agreed to subscribe in principle to the 11 norms contained in the 2015 report of the GGE (A/70/174).

Singapore is also committed to capacity-building, which we feel is essential for States in their efforts to effectively implement rules and norms of State behaviour. Singapore will launch an ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence in 2019. We have also partnered with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on a United Nations-Singapore Cyber Programme, which will raise awareness and build capacity in our region.

Our work in ASEAN is rooted in our belief that regional organizations can demonstrate how multilateralism continues to be relevant and beneficial for people all over the world. As the Chair of ASEAN this year, Singapore will continue to work with all our member States and our external partners to ensure that the regional architecture remains open, inclusive and rules-based. We are working with our partners to conclude the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. When that is concluded, the Partnership will be the world's largest trading bloc, accounting for up to a third of the world's GDP. But our interest is not just in big trade figures. We also want to send a powerful message that ASEAN member States and our six partners — India, China, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand — stand for and are committed to free trade, regional integration and international cooperation.

ASEAN member States are also working together to leverage the digital revolution for our peoples' benefit. We established the ASEAN Smart Cities Network at the thirty-second ASEAN Summit in April. The Smart Cities Network focuses on ensuring interoperability and the integration of services, and allows cities in our region to share experiences and exchange solutions and lessons learned. We have just concluded an ASEAN agreement on streamlining e-commerce within South-East Asia so that our businesses can market and sell their products easily, conveniently and seamlessly across South-East Asia.

ASEAN member States are also committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes, and to doing so through a multilateral process. In that connection let me now address my friends in Myanmar, and particularly the situation in Rakhine state, which is a matter of grave concern for the region and beyond. The crisis is a complex and deep-rooted intercommunal conflict, the roots of which go back centuries. More recently, we have read harrowing accounts of brutal and shocking atrocities. We have to condemn all human rights violations, threats, loss of life and the violence inflicted on defenceless people.

We expect the Independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Government of Myanmar to carry out impartial investigations expeditiously and to hold those responsible fully accountable. We also hope that

the voluntary return of refugees to Myanmar in a safe, secure and dignified manner will commence soon without undue delay.

However, ultimately, a political solution needs to be found — a solution and process that involves reconciliation, fairness, justice and better prospects for all communities. Only then can we achieve a durable solution to that complex, long-standing problem. All members of ASEAN stand ready to support and assist Myanmar in that very challenging and difficult situation.

Mr. Tiare (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We have also been watching the developments on the Korean peninsula, which is not far from our region. This year, Singapore was able to make a small contribution towards easing tensions by hosting the summit between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea leaders in June. That summit, as well as the three inter-Korean dialogues that have been held this year, are important steps towards the achievement of lasting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. Singapore hopes that dialogue and the associated efforts and the reservoir of trust that has been built up will bring peace ultimately to that troubled part of Asia.

Let me conclude by saying that there is no doubt that multilateralism needs to be defended and that the United Nations itself needs to be strengthened. That is the only way we can deal with the complex global challenges of the future. As States Members of the United Nations, each of us has a responsibility to work together and to improve and adapt the multilateral systems that we have built painstakingly over the past seven decades. We need to find solutions and build consensus, so that our people can lead better, more secure and more peaceful lives. Ultimately, a rules-based multilateral system is absolutely indispensable to our efforts to secure peace and prosperity for our people at home on this one planet that we call Earth.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nicola Renzi, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Justice of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Renzi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to congratulate Her Excellency María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session and to wish her fruitful work. Her long experience, both as Ecuador's Ambassador to the United Nations and as Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as her deep knowledge of the Organization, are valuable resources for the United Nations.

The Republic of San Marino, which this year has taken on the role of Vice-President of the General Assembly, supports the priorities of the President's agenda, as set out in her inaugural statement (see A/73/PV.1), and believes that they provide an important and fundamental impetus to the necessary reforms concerning the most important areas of the United Nations activity. The San Marino delegation assures the President of its fullest collaboration throughout the work of the General Assembly.

I would also like to express my country's gratitude to the outgoing President, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, for the important work he carried out during the seventy-second session.

My country would also like to extend its special thanks to Secretary-General António Guterres for his energy and determination in leading the United Nations and the reform processes of the Organization.

The theme chosen for this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is undoubtedly of great relevance. It gives Member States the opportunity to contribute constructively to the work of the General Assembly. There is a strong correlation between the two concepts that make up the subject of the debate: on the one hand, while the United Nations must be closer to the people of the world by translating the fundamental principles of its global action into concrete results, it is essential, on the other hand, not only to defend, but also to strengthen international cooperation and our Organization.

Recent developments in the global sociopolitical landscape have created obstacles to the development of multilateralism and are putting it at risk. Today, considering the magnitude of global challenges, their increasingly evident interrelationships and the need for Member States to work together to overcome difficulties, it is more and more essential to adopt an approach based on common and coordinated policies, in one word, multilateralism.

The Republic of San Marino has taken the decision to cooperate within the framework of international structures and mechanisms, at the top of which is undoubtedly the United Nations, because it believes in the strength of dialogue, democracy and respect for others. Indeed, the very peaceful coexistence of peoples relies on such values. My country believes that the United Nations must increase its leadership role in the management of global governance, given to its deeply democratic nature, its universal participation and undisputed legitimacy. The cultural diversity and traditions represented within the United Nations are not an obstacle, but rather an enormous asset, which makes it possible to adopt an approach that reconciles the interests of the international community and contributes to the attainment of human and sustainable development.

We cannot ignore the fact that in recent years other forums, such as the Group of Twenty, have been and are now exerting a great influence at the global level in the management of global governance. San Marino is grateful to those informal groups for the role that they have played. However, in their decision-making process, those groups should be more transparent and inclusive and should take into account the interests, concerns and aspirations of the countries that are excluded, in particular the interests of developing countries. The action of those informal groups must not be in competition with, but should be complementary to that of the United Nations. Trust, inclusiveness and dialogue are essential elements in the support of multilateralism and its ability to produce concrete results at the global level.

This year's theme is inevitably linked to the United Nations reform process. That process is of fundamental importance for the future world balance needed to ensure international peace and security and must remain at the centre of all our efforts. The reforms must make the structures of the Organization functional for the objectives that it has set for its global action. The credibility and authoritativeness of the United Nations depend on its ability to transform objectives into concrete actions that have a real and measurable impact on peoples' lives. The United Nations must be closer to the people of the world, communicate better and show them the importance and effectiveness of multilateral *collaboration for the lives of all citizens.*

In that regard, the Republic of San Marino reiterates its support for the reform agenda that Secretary-General António Guterres is implementing in the fields of peace and security and management and in the United Nations development system. We are confident that those reforms will improve the United Nations contribution to sustainable development, ensure greater effectiveness in the resolution of armed conflicts and the search for sustainable peace, and ultimately strengthen the United Nations system's ability to produce more concrete and visible results.

The Republic of San Marino expresses its concern about the increasing number of conflicts in many parts of the world and supports the coordinated action of the United Nations in the fields of peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Religious radicalism, terrorism, transnational organized crime, trafficking in drugs and human beings, weapons of mass destruction, violent extremism, marginalization and exclusion all pose a threat to international peace and security.

It is essential to analyse the root causes of conflicts if we want to promote disarmament and de-radicalization. At the same time, we need to encourage, through education, respect for and the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and access to justice.

The United Nations has often been criticized in recent years for the inability of the Security Council to intervene adequately in various conflict situations, in particular in Syria. Unfortunately, that has undermined the credibility of our Organization. The Republic of San Marino hopes that the Security Council will soon be able to fulfil its mandate effectively. In that regard, and in order to support rapid and decisive action by the Security Council, I am pleased to recall that my country has joined the code of conduct drawn up by the Accountability, Coherence, Transparency group to refrain from using the veto in cases of crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. San Marino has also joined the joint proposal by France and Mexico for voluntary suspension of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council.

In pursuing the goals of peacemaking and sustainable peace, the United Nations must promote a strategic partnership in which Governments, the United Nations system, international, regional and subregional organizations, civil society, the private sector and universities work together to achieve common goals. The relationship between peace and development is clear: there can be no sustainable development without peace, just as there can be no peace without sustainable

development. In that regard, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development becomes essential for the construction of inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies.

Three years have passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The international community is working hard to make the Sustainable Development Goals become a reality. While progress has been made in the implementation of some of the Goals and targets, it should be noted that there are strong inequalities in the implementation of the Agenda not only between countries, but also within them. The Republic of San Marino underlines the central role played by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, thanks to its follow-up activity. In that context, San Marino supports the ministerial declaration that was adopted this year by the Forum.

The most difficult and important challenge to the achievement of the objective of sustainable development is the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, in particular extreme poverty. Although the level of extreme poverty has fallen significantly in the past 10 years, as shown by the data contained in the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64), poverty remains, nevertheless, the main cause of hunger, and the number of undernourished people reached 815 million in 2016.

The Agenda emphasizes universal respect for human rights and human dignity and the fact that peace, justice, equality and non-discrimination are fundamental rights whose implementation becomes essential for the construction of inclusive societies.

The principle according to which no one should be left behind requires the adoption of specific measures to support people in vulnerable situations. The 2030 Agenda takes into account the needs of children, young people, people with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous people, refugees, displaced persons, migrants and people living in areas affected by humanitarian emergencies or in situations of armed conflict. Equal opportunities and respect for cultural and ethnic diversity are central to the full realization of human potential.

The promotion of actions in support of children and young people is a key element, since they must grow up free from all forms of abuse and exploitation. Unfortunately, children pay a very high price in areas of armed conflict; many lose their lives or are kidnapped, raped, used as shields or recruited as soldiers. Moreover, their schools are often destroyed, as are their hospitals, depriving them of their fundamental rights.

My country, which is a member of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, believes that international humanitarian laws and human rights laws must be respected in conflict situations. San Marino has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and it supports the Paris Commitments. Moreover, this year San Marino added its name to the list of countries supporting the Safe Schools Declaration, which is an important tool for the protection of educational facilities from military use during conflicts.

Only with the effective and full participation of women in decision-making processes that have a direct impact on their lives will it be possible to build sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies. The Republic of San Marino reaffirms its commitment to the fight against all forms of gender-based violence, as well as all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation. The objective of gender equality, the emancipation of women and girls, and the full realization of their human rights must be achieved. Gender equality must also be translated into equality in educational opportunities, with particular regard to scientific subjects, because technology, science and innovation in general play a vital role in meeting global challenges and in the promotion of sustainable development.

At the same time — and the Republic of San Marino is particularly convinced of this — the idea that sustainable development can be achieved through new technologies, science and innovation must be transmitted through means of communication that do not distort the truth, so as not to undermine the very concept of freedom. In that regard, the Republic of San Marino is offering a concrete and motivated contribution, also at the international level, on the theme of correct information with the objective of combating the increasingly dangerous phenomenon of fake news, which are deceptive, uncontrolled and capable of inciting hatred and nurturing prejudices.

The commitment of the international community must be directed towards all vulnerable groups without exception. People with disabilities and the elderly, for

example, must be ensured full participation in social, economic and cultural life.

The effects of climate change represent one of the greatest challenges of our time because of their unprecedented impact on our lives and, in particular, on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable. With an average temperature rise of 1.1° C above pre-industrial levels, 2017 was one of the hottest three years of all time. The effects of climate change do not respect national borders. They spread everywhere, in every country and continent. They are increasingly damaging national economies, communities and countries. That is a global problem that requires solutions that need to be coordinated globally. Moreover, it is essential to strengthen international cooperation in order to help developing countries move towards a low-emission economy.

The Republic of San Marino recognizes the deep synergy between the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda and welcomes the recent entry into force of the agreement. Events related to climate change, such as drought, which generates food and water shortages, have increased competition for access to those and other natural resources. Conflicts are a major cause of food insecurity. As a result, about 74 million people today are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

The number of conflicts has increased over the past decade and has led to the displacement of millions of people. In 2017, 68 million people were forced to leave their homes. In addition to persecution and armed conflicts, natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and hurricanes, partly resulting from the effects of climate change, have forced millions of people to seek refuge in other countries. Other disasters, such as socioeconomic deprivation and the lack of food, water, education and health, have led millions of people to seek their fortune elsewhere. All of that has contributed to an increase in migratory flows, which is a major challenge that the international community has been facing for some years.

San Marino has followed the intergovernmental negotiations that led, at the end of July, to the finalization of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which will be formally adopted in December during the intergovernmental conference on the topic in Morocco. Given its transnational nature, no country can address the migration phenomenon on its own. The compact strengthens the universality of human rights, including the rights of migrants, their dignity, regardless of their status, and their entitlement to the satisfaction of basic rights, and their protection. Its objective is not to stop migration, but to manage it in the best possible way through strengthened international cooperation. My country believes that the implementation of the compact will bring greater security, order and economic progress for the benefit of all.

The global compact is a clear example of what multilateralism can do and shows its potential and importance, in similar fashion as do the recent 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Indeed, through tangible measures aimed at financing development, the compact lays the foundations for a global plan of action.

In order to deal with today's global challenges, we need a renewed commitment to multilateralism. That is possible only through a strong United Nations Organization, capable of coordinating, in an effective way, our economic, environmental and social policies at the global, regional and local levels.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the strong support of the Republic of San Marino for all initiatives aimed at implementing the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alan Peter Cayetano, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mr. Cayetano (Philippines): There once was a widow who suffered an injustice. She went to a judge and told him, "Judge, I have suffered an injustice. Give me justice." The judge did nothing, so the next day she went to his office. Still he did nothing, so she went to his house during breakfast time and knocked on the door and said, "Judge, give me justice." Still nothing happened. Finally, she waited for him at night before dinnertime and still he would not see her. So, she went at midnight and knocked on his door and woke him up. Finally, the judge went out and told her, "You know, ma'am, I do not fear God, nor do I fear man, but because of your persistence, I will give you justice."

We all grew up with stories, anecdotes and parables — stories that give us hope, build our character and spark our determination to change the world. We are told those stories at home, in schools and in places

of worship. Thus, we come out of adolescence and enter adulthood with an idealism that makes us convinced that we can change the world, that we are here to unite and not to divide, that we are here to heal and not to hurt.

That is the same spirit of idealism that we feel the first time we enter the United Nations. Unfortunately, as time goes by, many, if not most, of us are changed by the world. We become victims of pragmatism rather than champions of idealism. As things get complicated and struggles get more difficult, we are tempted to simply continue doing what is already being done and accept that we cannot solve the problem. When that happens, we settle for a statement from the majority rather than a broad consensus on how to actually solve the problem.

The story reminds us that persistence is good, but it does not mean that we should be repetitive and simply keep doing the same thing. Albert Einstein defined stupidity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Certainly there is no stupidity in the United Nations, yet a tendency to just keep doing the same thing seems to plague us all. Trying new things is a challenge. It might or might not work, but we should not be afraid of trying, nor should we be afraid of failing. What we should fear is stagnation — that we as a community of nations end up accepting failure and making ourselves feel better by doing something, even if that something is precisely the same thing that failed to address the issues or solve the problems in the first place.

The good news is that there is persistence in what we call hope and idealism, in the aspiration of wanting to change the world. We teach our children to love God and to love our neighbour. But do we actually practice what we preach? So much inhumanity around the world has been done in the name of God, and so little is being done at times for our neighbours.

We live in a world that is fast becoming bigger, but also constantly getting smaller. From families to clans, to tribes to a federation of tribes that we call a nation, now we are but one global village. And with tools like the Internet and social media, everything is known and communicated in real time. Nowadays we are all neighbours, all members of the same global community. We rise up together; we suffer together. Being connected to each other all the time has transformed the world into a global community, and we are all citizens of this world.

Today, our social contract is no longer confined to our nation State. We should therefore exert efforts to connect, to emphasize commonalities and not differences, to think less that we are Filipinos, Americans, Chinese, French or Russians, and to think of ourselves more as global citizens, the people of the United Nations. Yes, it is true that we need not always act with a united front, and we do not always have to act as a community. But neither can we ignore the fact that there are many problems that can be solved only by a united global community. These can be issues relating to protecting the environment, extreme weather conditions, poverty and inequality, rule of law, countering terrorism or violent extremism: those are problems or challenges that we can only solve together. Together we can find pragmatic idealism, which will give us hope and the momentum to do more.

It is written: "Love thy neighbour". Migration is a reality. It is a fact. It is something that will continue to exist and even to grow. Issues relating to migration cannot be swept under the rug, but should be discussed openly, frankly and thoroughly. The global compact for migration is a huge step in the right direction, and that huge step will be even bigger if we can get everyone on board.

Again, "Love thy neighbour", we are told. That seems like a simple command, and yet in a complex world it is sometimes hard to carry out or implement. That is why Filipinos thank Pope Francis, and we thank Secretary-General Guterres and all the countries thathave led and stood by the global compact. We thank migrants around the world for inspiring us to have the first compact negotiated at the intergovernmental level to cover, in a holistic and comprehensive manner, all dimensions of international migration.

The Philippines, under the leadership of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, is one with the United Nations in being uncompromising on the issues of the rule of law, just and equitable peace, which leads to order, development and prosperity, and the protection of each and every human being's rights. As a sovereign and democratic country led by a duly elected President, we are on track to salvage our deteriorating country from becoming a narco-State or a State held hostage by the rich and powerful, who ignore the plight of the poor, powerless and marginalized.

The hunger for change, peace, and law and order is genuine. There is passion to improve our economy,

so that the more than 10 million Filipinos abroad can choose whether to work at home or abroad and not be forced by poverty or the lack of quality jobs to go abroad to find high-paying jobs at the cost of leaving their country and separating from their families. Those who stay at home can, at the very least, live a safe and comfortable life.

We may somehow and sometimes differ in how we express ourselves; yet that should not be interpreted as turning our backs on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On the contrary, the Philippines and President Duterte are instituting all of those reforms so as to be able to protect the rights of every single Filipino and every single human being living in the Philippines — yes, the rights of all Filipinos and all human beings, if that is at all possible. But in cases where we have to choose between protecting the rights of a law-abiding citizen and the law enforcer versus the drug lord or criminal who seeks to kill and destroy, it is clear that we will protect the former — the law enforcer and the law-abiding citizen. Would Members of the United Nations not do the same? Which country, which leader would not do the same? Who would not protect their citizens and their law enforcers?

Challenges will always be there, but so will hope! Hope leads to faith, and faith combined with action produces miracles. The United Nations is the place, the venue of great opportunity for adding action to our faith and for changing the world for the better. That is, of course, provided we can transcend our personal and sometimes national interest for the interest of the global community or, simply put, work for the greater good. Faith without action is dead. The United Nations is not a place to bury our dead; it is a place to rise up, to resurrect our hopes and to dream of a better world.

The President of the General Assembly, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, provides us with hope and something to aspire to, as seen in this year's theme: "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". Making the United Nations relevant to all is difficult. It is a dream; yet it is a dream worth fighting for. The Filipino people will remain persistent in our quest for peace, order, development and prosperity, and in the quest for a safe and comfortable life for all those living in the Philippines. We will continue to have faith but will add actions to our faith, and we will continue to love our nation and not only preach but actually do what we preach.

And finally, we would like to close our statement by expressing our sincere and profound gratitude to all the countries and peoples that have assisted us, stood with us and lifted us up when we needed it most. God bless all present. God bless all the peoples of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Karin Kneissl, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Ms. Kneissl (Austria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am present here in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria. I extend my greetings to the President and the Vice-President of the General Assembly.

I am the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria, but I would like to address the Assembly in Arabic. Why do I do so? For one thing, Arabic is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. I studied Arabic at the United Nations Office in Vienna. Arabic is a important and beautiful language, as well as part of the important Arab civilization.

I also learned in Lebanon during the years of war how people continue with their lives despite all odds and difficulties. That is the secret of life. There are men and women from Baghdad to Damascus who manage to just continue with their lives. I totally respect those people. All of us are the offspring of Adam. The offspring of Adam means humankind. In this Hall we have a voice, and we should use it to express the voice of those outside this Hall who are living in conflicts and wars, especially in the Middle East.

Allow me to mention the German writer, Bertolt Brecht, who said that there are some in the darkness and others in the light. We see only those in the light; we do not see those in the darkness.

(*spoke in French*)

I just quoted the German writer Bertolt Brecht, who spoke of those who are in the darkness and those who are in the light. We only see those in the light. Unfortunately, we diplomats often fail to make heard the voices of those who are in the shadows and in misery. Our diplomatic practices all too often favour fine declarations over real actions. I even dare to say that we indulge in a kind of dialogue of the deaf

when we reduce ourselves to a ritual of reading out our prefabricated notes. That state of mind reflects a loss of the sense of reality. We have lost the sense of any real exchange of views. When we speak, are we still discussing? Do we even know how to look in each other's eyes?

Albert Cohen, a connoisseur of the League of Nations, the organization that preceded the United Nations, wrote in Geneva his masterpiece *Belle du Seigneur*, whose main character is named Solal, a gentleman who works as the Assistant Secretary-General of that organization. Finally, that gentleman loses his post of Assistant Secretary-General at the League of Nations because he forgets his diplomatic restraint in the face of the persecution of German Jews in the 1930s. Has anyone here ever experienced the feeling of losing face when confronted with injustice and indifference? The multilateralism we are celebrating here is a sophisticated form of diplomacy. We have a wide range of instruments: our contracts, our conventions and our declarations. But where is the effectiveness of that multilateralism?

Allow me at this point to pay tribute to President Macron's statement to the Assembly earlier this week (see A/73/PV.6), which contains a very interesting reflection on multilateralism and the rule of law. For the President of France, those two things are synonymous. However, multilateralism is often blurred in a merry-go-round of meetings of which certain well-to-do diplomats have made a comfortable, subtle, interminable game that is enriched with litanies and mantras.

Unfortunately, we are content with this mantra when we talk about Syria and Yemen. We become intoxicated with words like "reconstruction", "stabilization", "constitution", and so on. But faced with all that, the populations, the children, seek only to survive. They need bread, drinking water, a few hours of electricity and a minimum of security. That is why, beyond those fine phrases, Austria wishes to contribute, as other countries already do, to financing the demining of Syrian territory. And with regard to the greatest tragedy of our time — and here I speak of Yemen — Austria is ready to increase its humanitarian commitment.

But let us come back from the action on the ground to the beautiful Hall in which we find ourselves on this beautiful Saturday. Multilateralism is based on a diplomatic approach to norms, and it is those norms that require us to condemn, in the name of universal values, the use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. They also demand the absolute rejection of biological weapons. In that vein, there is no reason why we should not categorically prohibit the production and use of nuclear weapons and explosives.

Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are essential for global security. The fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reminds us of the key role of the rule of law. Despite some success, the NPT has suffered from inadequate implementation. Now, what is the law? It consists of binding rules of an enforceable nature. Like other international treaties, disarmament treaties are not of a moral but rather of a legal nature. We are convinced that if we wish to really move towards nuclear disarmament, the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of paramount importance. My country, Austria, has been chosen as the seat of the organization responsible for the implementation of that treaty, and we are proud of that.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The destructive power of nuclear weapons has made it imperative that the legal prohibition of nuclear war be strictly observed in practice. We congratulate Latin America for creating the first international nuclear-weapon-free zone.

We all know that, according to the Charter of the United Nations, there is no just war. In 1945, the international community set out to save future generations from the scourge of war. Unfortunately, the United Nations has not succeeded in keeping that promise.

In addition, the majority of Latin American States have, as Austria has also done, recognized the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. That is a necessary condition for maintaining a credible system of international law. Similarly, Austria is a firm supporter of the International Criminal Court. We are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute this year. The establishment of a permanent independent tribunal for the prosecution of the most serious crimes was a historic milestone. We welcome the activation of the Court's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which has been in effect since July and is an important step in combating impunity. We regret, however, that the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court has

been undermined by several agreements impeding the surrender of persons to the Court.

(*spoke in English*)

The main purpose of the International Court of Justice is to foster trust in the international legal system. Secretary-General Guterres spoke at length (see A/73/PV.6) about the broken trust that we face. The most recent example of the importance of trust and reliability in international relations concerns the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is politically but not legally binding. The JCPOA, negotiated in Vienna, was the result of effective multilateral action. It contains a set of political commitments and includes, importantly, an independent verification system involving the International Atomic Energy Agency. That agreement demonstrates the importance of *pacta sunt servanda* — agreements must be kept — which many of us recall from our international law studies. That is a precondition for mutual trust and confidence-building in the international arena. Preserving the nuclear deal with Iran is a matter of respecting international agreements and one, in the end, of international security. If one country that originally committed to the JCPOA can walk away from the agreement without other parties to the agreement having violated it, mutual trust is weakened. Reliability is key to peaceful solutions of conflicts. That is especially true with regard to long-term conflicts such as the one on the Korean peninsula, where concrete and substantive measures should follow the first encouraging steps. We express our sincere respect for all those involved in that process.

Multilateralism has also failed several million women worldwide, as have individual States. Gender equality is about more than legal provisions. It is about daily practice in our countries and societies. That is why the fight against discrimination against and improving the situation of women and girls worldwide has been a long-standing concern of Austrian foreign and development policy. Our focus is centred on the women and peace and security agenda, the political and economic empowerment of women and the fight against gender-based violence, with a particular focus on combating female genital mutilation. More than 200 million women and girls worldwide are victims of such mutilation.

Together, we must stand up against that humiliation, which is a breach of human rights and an appalling violation of the physical integrity of girls and women. In 2018, the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs earmarked more than €1 million to help victims of female genital mutilation through surgical restoration, as their physical integrity can be restored. Here in New York, I had very constructive talks with the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF for the purpose of joining forces to advocate for the basic rights and physical integrity of girls and women. We aim to do that not only through conferences and seminars, but also through practical surgical help, whereby help truly becomes effectual. Women and children are also among the vulnerable victims of human trafficking. Illegal migration provides daily illustrations of that tragedy, with which we are familiar in the North-South and East-West contexts.

Vienna has found its specific identity within the United Nations family, in particular in the fight against organized crime, corruption and terrorism. Next year, Vienna will celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Office at Vienna. I am part of that generation of Austrians who grew up with the proud awareness of living in a United Nations city.

With this statement, I have tried to depart a little bit from the usual United Nations discourse. I have refrained from addressing every single issue dealt with by the United Nations system. However, I cannot conclude without endorsing Secretary-General Guterres' foremost concern, namely, climate change. The global energy mix continues to be dominated by fossil fuels, in particular coal. Scientists are working on finding new forms of energy, in particular for transportation. Will we see an increase in electric and other types of engines? Innovation, market forces and political action will decide.

It is in the Middle East that the major oil reserves are located. The States of the Middle East were shaped by the oil business in the aftermath of the First World War. This autumn, we are commemorating the end of the Great War 100 years ago. Let me remind the Assembly that, with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the new map of the Middle East was shaped by pipelines, in relation to which borders were subsequently drawn. The recent wars imposed on the Middle East were also fought for the sake of oil. Now Syria is a victim of the instability created by all those wars. A week ago, a ceasefire was brokered in northern Syria for the city of Idlib. Five national armies find themselves in a sort of

stand-off among millions of civilians and thousands of terrorists, some of whom are European Union nationals, or, as we call them, "foreign fighters".

The burning issue is how to move from that military situation to a diplomatic transition. The time has come to take courageous steps to launch such a process. We believe that there is momentum for creating a new dynamic. We encourage the decision makers from Washington, D.C., to Moscow, from Tehran to Jerusalem, and from Ankara to Damascus to seize that very momentum. We have a historic chance, and, there is no other alternative — according to the Hebrew expression — than to sit down at the negotiation table.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*) I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to sincerely congratulate the President and her friendly country, the Republic of Ecuador, on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session The fact that she holds that important position is a reflection of her skill and merit. I also sincerely thank her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for his valued efforts in conducting the work of the previous session in a highly professional manner.

I also wish to express the great appreciation of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his tireless efforts to reform the Organization's structure and enhance its role in the fields of sustainable development, conflict resolution, the maintenance of international peace and security and many other human issues of interest to all States of the world. Those efforts are tangible and enjoy our full support. I would like as well to recall with great appreciation the role of the late diplomat and former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and his endeavours to reform the Organization and work out solutions to international crises. I offer my sincerest condolences to his family and the international community at large.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain and with the support of the Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, and the Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to implement programmes and plans of all kinds to raise the standard of living and development for its citizens and residents, in keeping up with international efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and take advanced steps in that regard so that everyone can enjoy a decent living and a secure life.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has for many years been classified as a highly advanced country with regard to human development. It has succeeded in mitigating the impact of economic challenges thanks to its economic diversification efforts, its fiscal and monetary policies, and its investment incentives. That has had a positive impact on the Bahraini economy, which is now classified by the International Monetary Fund as one of the fastest -growing economies in the region. The discovery of the largest oil and natural-gas reserves since their first discovery and production in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 1932 will, God willing, constitute a strong impetus for Bahrain's economy in the future.

As part of the cooperation with the United Nations, His Royal Highness the Prime Minister issued a decree establishing the Follow-up and Coordination Committee between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations agencies as an outcome of the strategic partnership for the years 2018-2020. An agreement to that effect was signed by both parties to support the efforts of the Kingdom to achieve its development objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030.

Determined to highlight and document those efforts, my Government presented a few weeks ago its first voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. That was done here in New York during the participation of my Government in the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

The election of the Kingdom of Bahrain to membership in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for the period 2019-2022 reflects international appreciation for the policies pursued by His Majesty the King to strengthen rights and liberties and to support common efforts to achieve the objectives and purposes of the United Nations. Consistent with its efforts to continue its international contributions and its determination to cooperate with various organs of the United Nations, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted for the third time its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021.

That candidature reaffirms our policy of enhancing respect for human rights and maintaining freedoms, in line with international standards and building on the progress already achieved in that field.

Last March, during the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, nominations were solicited at the United Nations for the Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment. The Award aims to highlight achievements in the field of the protection of equal opportunities for women and men in the world. The Kingdom of Bahrain ranks as a Tier 1 country in the report on trafficking in persons issued by the United States State Department in June, making us the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to attain that high status and confirming the great accomplishments of the Kingdom of Bahrain in that field. Tribute was also paid by the State Department to Mr. Osama bin Abdullah Al-Absi, Chief Executive Officer of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons in the Kingdom of Bahrain — out of a total of 10international personalities — in appreciation of his extraordinary contribution to the fight against trafficking in persons.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is always looking to contribute to the achievement of a more prosperous future for the peoples of the world. We are fully aware of the importance of alliances for preserving regional security and for decisively addressing the challenges and threats to the stability of countries and the development and prosperity of peoples, particularly in the Arab Gulf region, which is considered a central region in the Middle East and the world.

We therefore believe that achieving lasting security, stable peace and sustainable development in the countries of the region is a collective responsibility that requires building a robust political, economic and military alliance among responsible countries in that region. Those countries must understand the current threats and the requirements for the future while having a genuine desire, serious will and wise policies that make them indispensable countries for shouldering such responsibility in collaboration with allied countries. That would help to safeguard the security and safety of countries and peoples, and deter whoever might be tempted to threaten the stability of that strategic region of the world.

That region is confronted with many dangers, notably from the regime in Iran with its policy of destroying and overthrowing States and their institutions, while supporting terrorist and extremist groups and interfering in the internal affairs of other States. The regime in Iran falsely accuses neighbouring countries of instigating events that take place in Iran. It seeks to impose its hegemony on the region by packaging and exporting its miserable revolution, while the Iranian people suffers from its tyranny, oppression and injustice. It disseminates an extremist ideology that has become a constant feature of its foreign policy, and it threatens the aspirations and ambitions of peoples who have coexisted for many centuries. We ourselves have coexisted with Iran and its friendly people, who have an ancient civilization. We were living side byside in an environment of shared heritage, culture, commerce and other aspects.

The situation in the Republic of Yemen is a case in point. The Iranian regime supports the militias behind the coup d'état in Yemen, allowing them to continue their criminal and hostile actions that threaten neighbouring countries through the launching of ballistic missiles against civilian-populated areas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That has been confirmed by major countries that are working to achieve security in the region and the reports of the United Nations, including the fifth report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/602) on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015). They clearly indicate that Iran is the origin of those missiles, which constitute serious threats to security and stability in the region and to the major international shipping lanes, the Strait of Hormuz and Bab Al-Mandab.

At a time when it is imperative to establish common mechanisms for collective security in the Middle East, we are confronted with another source of impediment to those efforts, namely, Qatar, whose actions threaten the security and stability of the region. Qatar maintains its policies and practices, which run against the concept of collective security through a dangerous approach aimed at spreading and fuelling terrorism and at toppling national Governments while striving to destroy them and dump them into chaos.

My country was a target of Qatari plans, which were not limited to the events of 2011, when Qatar provided financial, informational and logistical support for acts of violence and terrorism. Furthermore, Qatar has throughout its history attacked its neighbours repeatedly, including our territory in 1937 and 1986 and

the borders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1992. We reacted with wisdom and foresight to prevent our respective peoples from experiencing any harm. We and the Qataris are one people. We were once under a single leadership, and we are united by origin, family ties, history, objective and a common destiny. Our relations will remain close and impervious to all attempts to stir up strife or alter that everlasting reality.

We still hope that Qatar will return to its senses and prove its good intentions and desire to become a positive member of the region by responding to the demands of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the Arab Republic of Egypt. Those demands are consistent with the solid basis of international law, good-neighbourliness, mutual respect and the respect of the sovereignty and independence of States. They seek to put an end to the support and financing of terrorism by Qatar, and to have Qatar implement its commitments under the agreements that it has signed, notably the 2013 Riyadh Agreement and its implementation mechanism, and the subsequent 2014 supplementary agreement.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is working to put into action the various frameworks for constructive cooperation with its partners and friends around the world. We participate effectively in many alliances, including the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition, the Global Coalition against Da'esh and the Arab Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen. We reiterate our support for all initiatives aimed at establishing peace and security in the world — particularly in our region — beginning with the efforts of the United States of America under the leadership of President Donald Trump, the most important aspects of which are to work with the countries of the region to establish a Middle East strategic alliance, to classify certain terrorist groups that are supported by the Iranian regime and included on the United States Government's lists of terrorist organizations, and to implement the United States strategy vis-à-vis the Iranian regime, including the withdrawal from the incomplete nuclear agreement with Iran. We express our commitment to working with our allies to support the security and stability of the region.

In that regard, we renew our demand for an end to Iran's occupation of the three United Arab Emirates islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — and for Iran to respond seriously to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to restore sovereignty over its territory and resolve the issue through negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice.

I would be remiss if I did not commend the significant role and constructive efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the regional and international levels, using its prominent status and strategic role to consolidate international peace and security. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, sponsored an agreement on peace between the Republic of Eritrea and the Democratic Federal republic of Ethiopia.

The preservation of the State and its institutions is the main guarantee of the stability of peoples and the revival of communities aimed at preventing them from falling into the abyss of anarchy and terrorism. I want to recall the words of President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt in his statement before the General Assembly a few days ago:

> "[T]here is no way to achieve an effective international order if its main constituent unit, the nation State, which is premised on the notions of citizenship, democracy and equality, is threatened with disintegration....The disintegration of nations as a result of civil strife and regression to sectarian loyalty rather than national identity is responsible for the most dangerous phenomena in our contemporary world". (*A/73/PV.7, p. 8*)

In line with that consistent position, we reaffirm the need for a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis with effective Arab participation and a strong Arab role so that that State can exercise control and sovereignty over the totality of its territory and eliminate terrorist groups of all kinds, particularly those supported by Iran, such as Hizbullah and others. We also stress the need to prevent regional interference, which harms Syria's present and future, and the need to realize the aspirations of the Syrian people for a peaceful and stable life. We welcome the agreement between Russia and Turkey and reaffirm our support for the efforts of Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

With regard to the Republic of Yemen, the Kingdom of Bahrain has been committed to getting involved as an active member of the Arab coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen since its inception. The coalition is committed to restoring peace and security in Yemen and to assisting the brotherly people of Yemen in all humanitarian areas. The coalition is moving forward in

its mission to guarantee Yemen's unity, independence and territorial integrity and to put an end to foreign interference in its internal affairs, notably the serious interventions by the Iranian regime, until a political solution is reached with the participation of all, based on the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council and its implementation mechanism, as well as the outcomes of the national dialogue and Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

If we really want to have peace and security throughout the Middle East, Jerusalem must remain the historic symbol of coexistence and harmony among religions, as it always has been. The continuation of the conflict in Palestine is not an unavoidable destiny, and the achievement of peace is an attainable objective. We must therefore exert further efforts to reach a just and comprehensive peace that offers the Palestinian people, like all other peoples, the right to a decent life and an independent and sovereign State, with the borders of 4 June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital and the right that guarantees the return of refugees on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant resolutions of the international legitimacy. We stress the importance of not altering the legal status of East Jerusalem and the need for the international community to act in order to put an end to all Israeli measures concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem, their sacred sites and places of worship. We also underscore the need to offer all possible assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in order to preserve that United Nations agency and enable it to continue to discharge its noble duties.

Peace and stability in the Republic of Iraq and the maintenance of its sovereignty and the prosperity of its people are what we wish for that sincere Arab country. We are hopeful that Iraq will resume its leading role in the Arab, regional and international arena. We stress the need to put an end to regional interference in its internal affairs, particularly by the Iranian regime and its various agents, notably armed militias and terrorist organizations and groups, so that Iraq's brotherly people can enjoy security and prosperity.

With regard to Libya, we reiterate the consistent position of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which is to support all efforts towards the reconstruction of the State and the unification of the military institution so that it can protect and defend Libya and confront all forms of terrorism, preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the country and meet the aspirations of the brotherly Libyan people to achieve stability, development and progress.

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports the sisterly Kingdom of Morocco against the flagrant Iranian plotting and interference in its internal affairs, and we stand behind the serious and credible efforts by the Kingdom of Morocco to reach a political solution to the issue of the Western Sahara on the basis of the Moroccan initiative of autonomy and the relevant Security Council resolutions and within the framework of the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Assembly's choice of the theme of this session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" sends one message, namely, that if those objectives are realized, then we would have achieved the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and attained our desired goals. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes in this message and implements it while it continues on its development path. It perseveres in its efforts to enhance the security and stability of its people, and will never abandon its role in the strengthening of tolerance, the values of coexistence and the principles of dialogue between States, peoples, cultures and religions.

We all witnessed the high-level meeting convened here in New York by the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence on achieving peaceful and inclusive communities in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 16. We also witnessed the Kingdom of Bahrain Forum, held under the theme "Common visions for a successful future: national, regional and global challenges and opportunities". Those initiatives reflect the State of Bahrain's policies and its faith in partnerships and cooperation with the international community, which seeks to overcome all challenges.

A State based on an open and diverse society that welcomes all who set foot on its land and live among its people offers — and has always offered — a successful model to be followed. A State that has achieved all that it has achieved within such rich diversity and positive openness can only remain faithful to all international covenants and conventions. That is the model of a State that cares for the interests of its people and the region to which it belongs. Its approach will continue to be based on the commitment of everybody to good-

neighbourliness, mutual respect and to refraining from inflicting harm on others or jeopardizing their security.

As for those who go astray and revoke their covenant and those who dissent from those principles and frameworks, the implementation of international law ensures the security and stability of our States and a return to normality for the sake of a stable and prosperous environment that co sists of peaceful countries and reassured peoples in a prosperous and coexisting world.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ezéchiel Nibigira, Minister for External Relations and International Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Nibigira (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to give thanks to Almighty God, who has enabled us to meet in the magnificent city of New York, which is hosting the seventy-third session of the General Assembly of our Organization.

Allow me also to offer the President the sincerest greetings of His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi, who was unable to make the trip to New York and has honoured me with the task of representing him. My delegation would like to add its voice to all those who preceded it in this forum to extend to Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés our warm and heartfelt congratulations on her brilliant election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. As the fourth woman to assume that position out of 73 Presidents of the General Assembly, we have no doubt that she will utilize her feminine touch to make this session a resounding success. Naturally, she can count on Burundi's full support and cooperation throughout her term.

My delegation also takes this opportunity to pay a fitting tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, for leading the work of the seventy-second session and helping us to achieve such brilliant results. We also thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for the commendable actions he has already undertaken in the short time since he assumed his role at the helm of our Organization.

My delegation is deeply saddened by the death of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His death is an irreparable loss for all Africans and the entire United Nations family. We pay tribute to him for his tireless work and dedication to the cause of world peace and development.

My delegation welcomes the choice of the central theme of this session, namely, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". That is a timely theme, as the fragmentation and polarization of the world threatens the multilateralism that we desire and which is based on respect for the rule of law and the sharing of responsibilities in managing global issues.

For most of my statement, I will focus on the general situation in my country, Burundi, before addressing the current global challenges, whose solutions require concerted responses. At the political level, on May 17 Burundi organized a constitutional referendum, which proceeded in a calm and orderly manner. That event was preceded by very broad consultations with the population, which enabled them to express themselves in all their rich political, ethnic, regional and gender diversity — and in complete transparency — regarding the content of the new basic law.

Member States will recall that, when the new Constitution was enacted on 7 June, the President of the Republic of Burundi informed citizens and the international community that his second term of office would end in 2020 and that he was ready to support the new President, who will be elected that year. Contrary to the discourse of some who had claimed that his intentions were to shape the new Constitution for his own benefit and to remain in power until 2034, that gesture of high political and democratic value on the part of our President sets a welcome example.

Also at the political level, it would not be superfluous to underline that the spirit of tolerance, transparency and openness of the political space is continually being strengthened in Burundi. That is evidenced by the return and reintegration of the several thousand refugees and political leaders who had fled the country and who can now enjoy their civil and political rights without any hindrance. The liberation of more than 2,000 prisoners at the beginning of the year also formed part of that dynamic of reconciliation, social cohesion and political tolerance in the country.

With regard to the inter-Burundian dialogue, my delegation notes that dialogue as a means of finding peaceful solutions to political disputes has become part of our culture. Those who ask us to promote dialogue

are pounding on a door that is already open. In addition to the very commendable efforts of the East African Community, Burundi has the Permanent Forum of Political Parties — an excellent platform for dialogue among approved political parties in Burundi. It is within that framework that all political parties met in the north of Burundi on 3 August to informally discuss the important issues of the 2020 elections. The meeting resulted in the adoption by more than 20 political parties of a road map for free, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2020. The Independent National Electoral Commission, in accordance with the new Constitution, was also set up recently with due consideration given to the need to respect political, ethnic, regional and gender inclusiveness.

Regional dynamics are continuing normally. We have reached out to contacts at the highest level since the beginning of the year. Nearby, at the beginning of this month, the former President of Tanzania and facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, sent his team to Burundi for constructive consultations with all stakeholders in the country with a view to organizing the fifth and final round of the inter-Burundian dialogue in preparation for free, transparent and peaceful elections in 2020.

On the security front, the situation in Burundi is calm, stable and fully under control, with the exception of a few cases of common-law crime. That positive observation was echoed by subregional organizations as well as by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi and the Security Council in the 9 August briefing (see S/PV.8325) and the press statement of 22 August (SC/13461), respectively. That return to normalcy in the country made it possible, among other things, to hold the constitutional referendum without major incident, to accommodate a massive return of refugees and political leaders, to host several conferences at the regional and continental levels, and to host foreign dignitaries visiting Burundi.

With regard to the return of refugees, I am pleased to inform you that since 2016, more than 206,000 refugees have returned voluntarily to Burundi — including 100,000 who decided to return in 2016; 168,000 who returned to their families from January to August 2017; and 38,254 who have returned since the August 2017 tripartite agreement between Burundi, Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). That voluntary return of refugees is continuing at a satisfactory pace. However, my delegation would like to reiterate its request to UNHCR and friends in the region to intervene because some host countries are holding our exiled fellow countrymen hostage by erecting artificial obstacles to their voluntary return home. We also ask UNHCR to ensure that refugee camps maintain their civilian character, in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and Security Council resolution 2389 (2017) of 8 December on the Great Lakes region.

In that same vein, Burundi reiterates its urgent appeal to all countries that host, support and maintain the fugitive rebels of 13 May 2015 to extradite them to Burundi so that they can be held accountable for their actions before the courts. Their long-awaited extradition would be a major contribution to the strengthening of the democratic principles advocated by the Charter of the United Nations and a clear rejection of any attempt to gain power by unconstitutional and violent means.

With regard to human rights, Burundi reiterates its readiness to work and cooperate with other nations and the United Nations on the promotion of the protection of human rights in Burundi and elsewhere in the world, in accordance with the rules established by the Charter of the United Nations. That noble mission will be possible only through mutually respectful cooperation, frank and sincere dialogue among Member States and the use of mechanisms accepted by all, such as the Universal Periodic Review. The dangerous trend of some States to attempt to transform the Human Rights Council into a tool for political pressure and the regulation of geopolitics in the South risks compromising the objectives set by Member States when the Council was created in 2006. The drift towards the excessive politicization of human rights and the policies of selectivity and double standards run contrary to the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

The withdrawal of some countries from the Human Rights Council should not be interpreted as a negative act. Rather, it is a momentary disavowal of the dysfunction and almost exclusive control of that body by a minority of States. For its part, the Government of Burundi remains more committed than ever to the promotion of human rights in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 60/251, of 15 March 2006, establishing the Human Rights Council. Dialogue and cooperation based on mutual respect form

the cornerstone of the Government of Burundi's policy on the promotion of human rights.

With regard to cooperation with the United Nations, Burundi is proud to participate actively and successfully in United Nations and African Union (AU) peace missions. More than 6,000 Burundian men and women are deployed in the various peacekeeping operations, mainly in the Central African Republic and Somalia. The excellent work of our brave soldiers on peace missions, who have voluntarily chosen to sacrifice their very lives in saving the lives of others far from their homeland and in particularly difficult conditions, must be duly appreciated and commended. In order to demonstrate its growing interest in peacekeeping, Burundi is proud to have joined other nations in renewing its international commitment during the Action for Peacekeeping high-level meeting held on 25 September.

With regard to Burundi's presence on the Security Council's agenda, my delegation would like to reiterate its strong appeal to the Council to have the courage to remove Burundi from its agenda. It should be noted that the current political and security situation in the country is calm, stable and fully under control. It is far from posing a threat to international peace and security, which is the Security Council's field of expertise. The precious time that the Council allocates to discussing Burundi should be devoted to the other areas of tension and conflicts that are raging now. Burundi today should not be an item on the agenda of the Security Council. We need instead the attention of the United Nations agencies tasked with socioeconomic development in order to boost our economic recovery.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains a priority for Burundi. The Government of Burundi has just adopted a 10-year plan, the Burundi national development plan 2018-2027. The plan aims to restore the structural balance of the Burundian economy through the strengthening of food self-sufficiency and export diversification through the promotion of agro-industrial, commercial and extractive enterprises. We need to develop the energy and craft sectors, build and maintain infrastructure to support growth, improve access to basic social services, including education, health and social protection, continue environmental and regional planning programmes, improve financial governance and decentralization, and develop regional and international partnerships. The Government of Burundi therefore calls on all bilateral and multilateral partners to consider those goals in their projects aimed at supporting the Burundian people and helping us to implement our plan.

With regard to the unilateral economic sanctions that the European Union's partners have imposed on Burundi in the aftermath of the 2015 election fever, my delegation would like to inform the international community that the context in which those sanctions were imposed has fundamentally changed. My delegation also notes that, following the undisputed return of peace and security to the country, the AU Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in early July in Mauritania, adopted a resolution calling on the European Union to lift the unjust and immoral sanctions against Burundi. At the end of its meeting in New York on 25 September, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union issued a communiqué reiterating the call of the previous AU Summit to lift politically motivated sanctions in order to create conditions that would foster socioeconomic recovery in the country. On the same occasion, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union welcomed the return of peace and stability to Burundi.

With regard to global challenges, Burundi believes that migration issues must be resolved in a constructive and concerted manner among all Member States. Burundi fully supports the ongoing process within the Organization we share to adopt, in December 2018 in Marrakech, Morocco, a global pact for safe, regular and orderly migration.

We cannot ignore that climate change is an existential threat to the economic, social and sustainable development of Africa and beyond. Without immediate and coordinated action, it will be much more difficult and costly to adapt to the future consequences of those changes. Each State member of the Organization must urgently respect its freely made commitments within the framework of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In the same vein, developed countries must honour their commitments to finance the adaptation of Southern economies to the effects of global warming.

The SDGs are a call to action for all poor, rich and middle-income countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. In order to achieve the 17 Goals that we set ourselves in 2015, two factors are needed — the political will of all leaders of Member States and the availability of adequate and predictable

funding. Particular attention should be paid to supporting the efforts of the most vulnerable countries, such as the least developed countries, landlocked countries, small island developing States and countries in post-conflict situations.

The quest for peace and stability concerns us all. In that regard, we welcome the recent progress made in the search for sustainable African solutions to African problems. We welcome the new positive developments for peace in South Sudan and the positive changes in the Horn of Africa. We welcome the fact that those new peace initiatives coincide with the Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace that we adopted in the political declaration of 24 S ptember (resolution 73/1) in this very Hall.

The lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the current status quo are contributing to insecurity and destabilization in the Middle East. The international community must mobilize to find a comprehensive resolution to that conflict, which is more than 50 years old. Burundi supports the vision of a region where two States, Israel and Palestine, would live side by side, within secure and recognized borders, in peace and mutual respect, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is the only viable solution.

With regard to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Burundi will remain committed, alongside other nations, to playing a leading role in the common struggle to build a world free of acts of terrorism. However, we remain convinced that, beyond the necessary military action, an effective fight against terrorism requires combating radicalization, which is fuelled by ignorance, poverty, youth unemployment, illiteracy, injustice, humiliation and exclusion, which provide terrorism with the ideal prey and all it needs in order to materialize and spread before our eyes.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to note from this rostrum that the realities and demands of the current world require us to adapt our global governance to the new challenges of our ever-changing world. That leads us to point out that the revitalization of the General Assembly and the long-awaited reform of the Security Council are becoming increasingly pressing issues if we want a United Nations that can effectively meet the legitimate expectations of all nations. In that regard, Burundi reaffirms its commitment to the Common African Position on Security Council reform, as contained in the Ezulwini Consensus. It is time to redress the historical injustice done to Africa, the only continent that is not represented in the permanent membership category and one that is also underrepresented in the non-permanent membership category of the Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Erywan bin Pehin Datu Pekerma Jaya Haji Mohd Yusof, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam.

Mr. Yusof (Brunei Darussalam): It is a great honour and privilege to be here today to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to all gathered here in this Hall.

I express my congratulations to Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and the people of Ecuador on her assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I also convey my appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his hard work in the service of the international community. I also do not want to forget his staff, which continues its work throughout the year, not just on a Saturday afternoon.

I would also like to take this opportunity to join others in expressing our condolences to the family of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Atta Annan, whose remarkable service to the Organization and many valuable contributions to advancing global peace, humanity and development serve as an inspiration to us all.

We are currently living in a world with ever-increasing geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainties. The foundations and principles of the international order that usually guide our expectations are in some cases being called into question and in others being ignored. For a small country such as Brunei Darussalam, such unpredictability can be daunting and runs counter to regional and international efforts to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

In order for us to achieve our goals of maintaining peace and promoting prosperity and sustainable development, we greatly depend on the consistency and stability underpinned by our adherence to international obligations and the rule of law. It is crucial that we all commit to an effective multilateralism that addresses

global challenges, ranging from conflict prevention to economic uncertainty and environmental degradation. In doing so, we have to work together in order to ensure the relevance of the United Nations to all, and everybody needs to play their part in honouring the international frameworks and agreements that we have worked so hard to develop together.

One such agreement is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which helps us realize our vision of improving people's lives without leaving anyone behind. We are fully committed to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the Agenda, which we hope will safeguard the welfare of our citizens for generations to come. In our efforts to achieve the SDGs, it is imperative to understand and respect the right of each country to choose its own development path, including the adoption of legislation that is suited to its own national circumstances.

A challenge for many developing countries in pursuing sustained economic development is posed by the uneven growth prospects amid many risks, including volatility in energy prices. Brunei Darussalam is no exception. To meet that challenge, we are concentrating on diversifying our economy. Underlying those efforts is our commitment to free trade and the rules-based multilateral trading system. It is critical, especially during these times of increasing trade tensions, that all can benefit from it.

Our stand on that matter is evident through our participation in various platforms such as the World Trade Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which support efforts to facilitate trade and investment. Our involvement in various bilateral and multilateral free-trade agreements is also a testament to that commitment. Such agreements help ensure market access and strengthen trade links with our partners within and outside the region. They are particularly beneficial to small developing countries because they also spur other forms of cooperation, including human resources development and technical assistance. All of these are vital as we prepare ourselves to take advantage of the potential opportunities brought about by the fourth industrial revolution.

That being said, we also need to remain mindful of the fact that efforts to increase economic growth should be aligned with our shared responsibilities to ensure a safe and healthy environment for our future. Climate change poses a clear and serious threat to humankind, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change remains our greatest hope in addressing that global challenge together. Our progress in meeting the economic and environmental goals under the 2030 Agenda is determined by our ability to maintain durable peace and stability. The work of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, mediation and peacekeeping is key to the prevention and resolution of conflict and violence.

In that regard, we appreciate the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen peacekeeping operations through his Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which will enhance global support for peacekeeping missions with a view to contributing towards sustainable peace. We truly value the selfless work and sacrifice that our peacekeepers show in securing a better world. Therefore, we are also pleased to join others in endorsing the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, as it underscores our collective investment in the success and performance of our peacekeepers.

Lastly, in building a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world, it is important that the United Nations continue to promote the rule of law. On that note, we are particularly concerned over the unresolved question of Palestine. For more than half a century, Palestinians have been denied peace, justice and freedom. In solidarity with the Palestinian people, we strongly condemn actions and measures that blatantly violate their rights and dignity. Those violations run counter to international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

Like many countries, we have been alarmed by the developments in Jerusalem and the continued violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. We remain firm in supporting the call to protect the Palestinian population and to assist in the creation of a fully independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. It is Brunei Darussalam's greatest hope for Palestine that all States Members of the United Nations and other organizations will work together to realize the vision of a two-State solution, in full conformity with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and all relevant United Nations resolutions.

Our unwavering commitment to international norms and multilateral partnerships is central to our efforts to advance our mutual aspirations of living together in peace and harmony. A significant part of that commitment is our continued support for the United

Nations. For more than 70 years, the United Nations has been the epicentre of our rules-based multilateral system, where its work, from advocating values of mutual respect to promoting development, has made an impact on people all over the globe. In spite of that, it still faces its fair share of criticism. The United Nations might not be perfect, but it is the best hope that we have for achieving the future that we want together.

Mrs. Gueguen (France), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The late Kofi Annan once said that we need to keep hope alive and strive to do better. For our part, Brunei Darussalam will continue to be a reliable partner and a friend to all for the betterment of the United Nations and the world at large.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Mr. Qureshi (Pakistan) (*spoke in Urdu; English text provided by the delegation*): May I begin by congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly. The stewardship of this session by an accomplished leader of her rank and stature will undoubtedly lend to the proceedings of the Assembly greater credence and strength. I also commend Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for his able guidance during the previous session.

We appreciate Secretary-General António Guterres for his exemplary leadership of the Organization, and support his efforts to instil a new sense of mission and direction within the United Nations. We offer our profound condolences over the passing of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who was a leading light and a driving force in taking the United Nations agenda forward into the twenty-first century.

We also express our deep sympathy and condolences to the Government and people of Indonesia over the damage caused by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

Two months ago, the people of Pakistan voted for change, reform and a fundamental shift in their paradigm of governance. They opted for a Pakistan that is confident and compassionate, open and articulate, as well as peaceful and principled — a Pakistan that will engage with its neighbourhood and the world on the basis of equality and respect; a country that will seek the resolution of conflicts and the convergence of interests; and a State that will build upon common understandings, reciprocal commitments and shared ideals.

Pakistan will brook no compromise on the interests of the nation, the sovereignty of the State or the security of its people. Our Government is keen to pursue a policy of partnerships for peace, security and prosperity in our immediate neighbourhood and beyond. We seek a peaceful environment to promote our development agenda, at both the national and the regional levels.

I stand before the Assembly as the representative of a quintessential developing country that has the welfare of its people at its heart. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, we have begun giving shape to the vision of a new Pakistan through a set of integrated policies and programmes.

The world is facing a moment of inflection. The very foundations and principles on which the edifice of global order has been constructed are under assault. Inequality within and among nations is on the rise. The forces of protectionism, populism and isolationism are gaining currency. Intolerance is ascendant over acceptance, rhetoric over reason, and power over principle. Where the world needs bridges, we see fortifications; where it needs highways, we see blockades; and where it yearns for freedom, we see cages. New forms and manifestations of imperialism are appearing. Multilateralism is on a path of retreat. Unilateralist tendencies are growing. Long-standing legal norms are being eroded for strategic and commercial considerations.

Dark clouds of trade wars are looming large on the horizon. The challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, pandemics, transnational organized crime and sustainable development are becoming ever more complex. The post-World War idealism is giving way, slowly but surely, to a hardened, militaristic approach. That trend is not only regressive, it is downright dangerous.

We note with concern seismic shifts in the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. As existing conflicts are exacerbated, new threats have emerged. Competing interests of regional and extraregional Powers are deepening long-standing fissures and widening the fault lines, even as the tragedy of Palestine continues to fester. In these uncertain times, the global

community appears to be on a desperate quest for leadership, a vision and an order.

Let us consider the issue of striking the right balance between the freedom of expression and the sentiments of a people. Where there ought to be empathy, understanding and compassion, we see caricatured, ill-informed and jaundiced judgments. Recently, Muslims across the world were pained at a planned competition of cartoons of our holy Prophet — peace be upon him. That deeply hurt Muslim sentiments and sensibilities. For its part, Pakistan will continue to collaborate with friends and partners on the United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation platforms aimed at reversing the growing tide of bigotry, at building cross-cultural understandings and promoting dialogue among civilizations.

The theme of this year's General Assembly session is not only apt but also mirrors the priorities of my Government. As we embark on our journey of change and reform, Pakistan stands ready to strengthen its partnership with the United Nations family of institutions. Alongside like-minded States, we will continue to be a leading voice advocating for the comprehensive reform of the Security Council, with a view to making it more democratic, representative, transparent and effective. We will continue to oppose the creation of new centres of privilege and prestige in defiance of the principles of democracy and the core tenet of the Charter of the United Nations on the sovereign equality of Member States.

Since its inception, Pakistan has been an ardent adherent to the Charter of the United Nations, and an active participant in United Nations processes. Pakistan has served seven terms on the Security Council, five presidencies of the Economic and Social Council and four terms on the Human Rights Council. That is a reaffirmation of the international community's faith in Pakistan.

We have championed the cause of the peoples of Africa and Asia as they seek to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination and wrest independence from the yoke of colonial rule. As we pay tribute to the memory of the late Nelson Mandela, Madiba, we are reminded of the high ideals for which he sacrificed so much. The best way to honour the legacy of that great leader is to continue to fight the good fight for freedom, dignity and equality.

Pakistan remains one of the oldest, largest and most active contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations the world over. Pakistani Blue Helmets have laid down their lives in the cause of global peace. We are proud of their sacrifices. Pakistan also remains host to one of the oldest peacekeeping missions, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan. We greatly value the Observer Group's contribution to monitoring the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan desires a relationship with India based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. We seek resolution of disputes through serious and comprehensive dialogue that covers all issues of concern. We were to meet on the sidelines of this session of the General Assembly to talk about all issues with India. The Modi Government of India called off the dialogue for the third time, each time on flimsy grounds. They chose politics over peace. They used the pretext of Pakistani stamps issued months ago depicting a Kashmiri activist and grave human rights violations, including pellet gun victims, as an excuse to back out from the talks.

Dialogue is the only way to address the long-standing issues that have long bedevilled South Asia and prevented the region from realizing its true potential. The unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute hinders the realization of the goal of durable peace between our two countries. For over 70 years now, it has remained on the agenda of the Security Council and is a blot on the conscience of humankind. For 70 years, the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir have struggled for their right to self-determination in the face of overwhelming oppression and gross violations of their fundamental human rights by the Indian occupation forces.

Pakistan welcomes the recently released report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report rightly lifts the veil from decades of obfuscation and chronicles the massive ongoing violations of human rights in Indian-occupied Kashmir. It vindicates our position. No longer can the excuse of terrorism be used to continue to systematically oppress the Kashmiri people. Pakistan endorses the United Nations report and calls for the early institution of a commission of inquiry under United Nations auspices to investigate and ascribe responsibility. We will welcome the commission to Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and we hope that India will do the same, too.

To divert the world's attention from its brutalities, India frequently violates the ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir. Despite numerous violations, Pakistan has acted with restraint. But if India ventures across the Line of Control, or acts upon its doctrine of limited war against Pakistan, it will evoke a strong and matching response.

Strategic stability in our region has been and continues to be undermined. That is evident in various ways, including by the introduction of destabilizing weapon systems, the pursuit of discriminatory approaches by certain States to supply advanced military hardware and sensitive technologies, and the adoption of offensive force postures and doctrines that envisage a conflict beneath the nuclear threshold. In the circumstances, Pakistan has no option but to maintain a minimum credible deterrence. We have been advocating for many years now for a strategic restraint regime for South Asia. Pakistan is ready to engage with India to promote meaningful confidence-building, risk reduction and measures to avoid an arms race.

Let me also reiterate Pakistan's continued support for strengthening regional organizations as platforms for poverty alleviation and socioeconomic uplift. The regional body for South Asia, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), has been rendered ineffective owing to the intransigence of one country. We remain fully committed to a functioning SAARC that can improve the lives of the people of the region.

Afghanistan, and together with it, Pakistan, has suffered heavily owing to global power plays, strategic miscalculations and cognitive dissonance. That there is no military solution to the war in Afghanistan is now a foregone conclusion. It is time to act upon that conclusion. A negotiated settlement has assumed urgency in the face of the worrisome and growing presence of Da'esh in Afghanistan. Pakistan will continue to lend its support to an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process.

On the bilateral plane, our two countries have operationalized the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity. It lays down the blueprint for extensive engagement in all areas of common interests. Pakistan has hosted the longest-lasting refugee presence of modern times. Our role and sacrifices can perhaps be better appreciated when juxtaposed with the rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiments in nations that are more resource-rich and developed than ours and that have faced the brunt of fewer immigrants and over a shorter timescale. Because of the protracted conflict situation in that country, Afghanistan's security has a direct spillover impact on our security and stability. We look forward to the safe, dignified and voluntary return of Afghan refugees to their homeland.

For the past 17 years, Pakistan, at a great cost of life and resources, has been combating the fires of terrorism and extremism. Through the determined operations of our armed forces and with the full support of our people, Pakistan has turned the tide against terrorism. With the deployment of 200,000 troops, Pakistan has conducted the largest and most effective counter-terrorism campaign in the world. Peace and security have returned to our cities and towns. In our own national interest and in line with our national action plan, we will continue to strengthen our counter-terrorism frameworks and regimes.

Pakistan continues to face terrorism that is financed, facilitated and orchestrated by our eastern neighbour. We wanted to sit with India to discuss all issues, including terrorism, that have created violence in our cities and towns and have led to tens of thousands of casualties among innocent Pakistanis. Pakistan shall never forget the mass murder of more than 150 children in a Peshawar school, the terrible Mastung attack and many others that have links with terrorists supported by India, and we will never forget the terrorist attack in India against the Samjhauta Express, which was carrying innocent Pakistanis — and now its confessed perpetrators are being allowed to walk free.

We wanted to share the evidence with India and the international community concerning those who supported those acts of violence and terrorism. We have already shared that evidence with the United Nations. We have in our custody a serving Indian naval officer, Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has provided us with the most incriminating evidence by accepting that he, at the instruction of his Government, financed, planned and executed acts of terrorism and violence in Pakistan. That is but one Indian State-sponsored official terrorist. Many more have been launched by our eastern neighbour inside Pakistan to create terror and mayhem.

It is India that, in plain sight of the international community, perpetrates State-sponsored terrorism in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and in other parts

of India. It is of concern to the United Nations, given the fact that Jammu and Kashmir remains on the agenda of the Security Council, and it is a matter of concern for the international community, as humankind is being crushed and human rights are being violated all over India, where people have stood up against oppression and occupation and demanded their fundamental rights. It is also a matter of concern for the international community that India has sponsored terrorism and aggression against all of its neighbours.

The strongest antidote to the poison of terrorism is development that yields dividends. The vision of the Belt and Road Initiative is path-breaking and is being led by a world leader of great wisdom and foresight to create a community of common destiny. It is a global common good that is beneficial to all. Our vision for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is to help translate our geostrategic potential into geoeconomic dividends. Pakistan looks to offer the vital connectivity nodes linking the Middle East with western China, which will afford Central Asia the shortest, most feasible access possible to the sea.

The challenges of our times have enhanced, not diminished, the relevance of the United Nations. The United Nations must remain the central platform for dialogue and diplomacy. In order for the United Nations to remain relevant to the needs of the people and respond to the demands of the twenty-first century, we believe that the following steps must by taken.

First, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be pursued in order to reduce inequality within and among nations. We hope that the Secretary-General's High-level Conference on Financing for Development and the Means of Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, held earlier this week, will serve as a catalyst for rapid progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Second, corruption is a grave crime. Those who provide safe havens for ill-gotten wealth are partners in the crime and equally culpable. Existing international conventions on corruption do not go far enough in addressing that malaise. It is time to return the looted wealth to its rightful owners, namely, the people, and to hold both the perpetrators and their abettors accountable.

Third, climate change poses serious challenges to all States. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change must not be allowed to be held hostage to sectoral interests. Even as Pakistan contributes minimally to global emissions, our country remains among the most vulnerable. Our Government completed the planting of one billion trees — a project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. We have now launched an ambitious project to plant 10 billion trees across all of Pakistan.

Fourth, a rules-based global order is vital for the promotion of international trade in goods and services, as well as global nuclear commerce and governance mechanisms. Carving out exemptions and bending established rules to suit partisan interests must be eschewed.

Fifth, objective and transparent criteria must be developed to facilitate trade in strategic goods and membership in the groupings that govern it. That is essential for countries pursuing economic growth and development.

Sixth, the sanctity and integrity of international agreements must be maintained. Strategic stability must be nurtured by policies of restraint and responsibility, not by considerations of profits and politics.

Seventh, technology and innovation are key to reshaping our States and societies. We must strike a prudent balance between guarding against the misuse of emerging technologies and facilitating access to them on the part of developing countries. It is essential to develop universally agreed legal frameworks in the area of cybersecurity, lethal autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence and the weaponization of outer space.

Eighth, the dislocation of people in recent years, primarily because of wars but also as a result of pervasive poverty, has energized the global debate on refugees and migrants. The deliberations leading to the global compacts on refugees and migrants represent a step in the right direction. The true litmus test of those compacts lies in the effective implementation of commitments.

Pakistan believes that a new consensus on peace, security and development can and should be developed. A new paradigm for universal peace and prosperity is both desirable and achievable. Pakistan will be a willing and able partner to the international community in that worthwhile pursuit. The challenges ahead are daunting; the road forward is untravelled, and the route is uncharted. These times call for deliberation and diligence, but also for cooperation and concerted action. They call for a truly united United Nations.

The Kashmiri wife who lost her husband, the Kashmiri school boy who lost his eyesight and his future to pellet-gun injuries, the Syrian father who saw his child drown, the Palestinian girl who suffocates under siege, and the African migrant willing to risk all for a better life continue to look to the United Nations for support and succour. Let us not fail them any longer.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Moses, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Moses (Trinidad and Tobago): I am honoured to address this eminent gathering of nations seized with advancing the international agenda towards the realization of international peace, sustainable development and the well-being of all humankind.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend our congratulations to the President on her election to lead the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. As we continue to pursue gender equality across all borders and spheres of endeavour, her election to the post of the presidency of the General Assembly is further impetus for the global rethinking and acceptance of female leadership, and towards strengthening the global pursuit of gender parity, empowerment and equality.

Allow me to further express the gratitude of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago to her predecessor, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, whose leadership helped advance the efforts of the United Nations to undertake the ambitious task of system-wide reform. The reform agenda marks a new, emerging approach to multilateral institutionalism and presents an opportunity to transform the United Nations into a dynamic body capable of better responding to the needs and challenges that reflect the diversity of its membership.

This year's theme, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", compels us to reflect on the nexus between the Organization's ambitious and comprehensive reform agenda and our shared pursuit of a sustainable future for all. The myriad multidimensional threats that litter the international development landscape threaten our efforts to ensure universal sustainable development and the eradication of extreme poverty, as well as peace and security and the enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all.

The existential threat posed by unmitigated climate change and global warming, extreme poverty, violent extremism, gender-based violence and the spread of new and infectious diseases is one that is best faced together as Members of the United Nations. As the bastion of international peace and security, human rights, sustainable development and the rule of law, the United Nations, as an institution, is compelled to adopt a shift in its approach in order to ensure adequate, effective and efficient responses to the challenges of our time. It is on that basis that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform agenda, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

As we pursue the cost savings and efficiencies associated with the reform agenda, however, it is imperative that we not lose sight of the foundational principles, values and overarching objectives of this institution. In that regard, I am reminded of the words of our former Secretary-General, the late Kofi Annan. He reminded us that, even though the United Nations is an Organization of States, the Charter of the United Nations is written in the name of "We the peoples." Ultimately, that is the role of the United Nations, namely, to serve the needs and hopes of people everywhere. People must be at the centre of our common endeavour.

Having recognized that far-reaching truth, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through wide consultation, developed its Vision 2030 national development strategy. That multidimensional and inclusive development policy places our people, our greatest resource, at the centre of our pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. If we really are to ensure that no one is left behind, we must redouble our efforts to ensure equitable access to opportunity and mobility for the most vulnerable. Those who have long been left behind must now be positioned to participate in society as equals.

By its very nature, the scope of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development speaks to the wide range of issues that challenge global sustainable development. Notwithstanding the global relevance of those challenges, it is widely acknowledged that asymmetries exist with regard to the impact of external shocks on small island developing States (SIDS), such as Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of

Action (SAMOA) Pathway as an essential component in the catalogue of development frameworks needed to specifically guide the sustainable development of SIDS. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the San Pedro Declaration adopted at the Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Midterm Review of the SAMOA Pathway in Belize, and looks forward to participating in the high-level review summit of the SAMOA Pathway in 2019. Moreover, Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to reinforce the principle that SIDS continue to be a special case for sustainable development, given our complex and intricate challenges. As we and our regional partners prioritize the unique threats to the development of our people, the 2030 Agenda provides an important guide in our efforts to ensure that none of our citizens are left behind.

In manifesting the intent of Agenda 2030, we have come to appreciate the importance of prioritizing the well-being of all of our citizens. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago and our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) counterparts are taking action to address the threat that the high incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) poses to our region. Those diseases ravage our human resources, burden our health-care systems and undermine our development efforts. Since the adoption of the Port of Spain Declaration on NCDs by the CARICOM Heads of Government in 2007 and the landmark United Nations high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in 2011 (see A/66/PV.3 *et seq.*), Trinidad and Tobago has implemented a number of strategies for controlling and reducing NCDs.

Our 2017-2021 National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases aims to harness the collective efforts of both the public and private sectors to prevent and control NCDs. In that regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the adoption of the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. By raising the standard of living, improving the educational and health-care systems and providing equal access to opportunities, Trinidad and Tobago's Vision 2030 is actively pursuing the development of a resilient, equitable and healthy society that places all people at the centre of our sustainable development efforts.

However, no challenge is more pressing than climate change. For small island developing States such as Trinidad and Tobago, casting doubt on the scientific truth behind climate change only serves to distract and delay the urgent and ambitious action that is needed to confront the existential threat posed by global warming.

Earlier this year, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago deposited its instrument of ratification to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, thereby formalizing its steadfast commitment to the principles and goals of the Agreement. As our national contribution to achieving the overarching objectives of the Paris Agreement, Trinidad and Tobago has committed to reducing cumulative greenhouse-gas emissions from industry, power generation and the transport sector by 15 per cent by the year 2030.

As a State party to the agreement, Trinidad and Tobago will be actively engaged in the negotiating process within the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which seeks to operationalize the Paris Agreement on a scale that will result in achieving the long-term temperature goal and further limit the increase in global temperature to 1.5°C. It is also hoped that the operationalization process will catalyse international cooperation on mitigation, adaptation and climate finance to that end.

Our commitment to the Paris Agreement reflects Trinidad and Tobago's assumption of overall responsibility to support international efforts to tackle shared environmental challenges, which include climate change, ozone depletion, land degradation, the loss of biodiversity, the illegal trade in wildlife and the movement of hazardous waste.

As a twin-island State, the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources is critically important to the development priorities of Trinidad and Tobago. However, Trinidad and Tobago is located in a region that is highly vulnerable to an unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and to the impact of unsustainable practices on the marine environment.

We therefore welcome the first session of the intergovernmental conference that seeks to develop a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to participating in future sessions of the intergovernmental conference

in 2019 and 2020, which will draft the text of the instrument that will ensure the protection and sustainable management of the common heritage of humankind for the benefit of present and future generations.

One of the pressing challenges facing the region is the termination of correspondent banking relations and the labelling of countries in the region as non-cooperative tax jurisdictions. Those actions have severely destabilized the financial sectors of the region without due consideration having been given to the financial, human and technical constraints confronting our member countries.

As a result, the region's efforts to bolster our economic stability and effectively engage in the global financial system have been stymied to the detriment of our economic growth and progress. That has the potential to further erode the development gains achieved thus far. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago joins with other CARICOM member States in reiterating our commitment to ensuring compliance with globally accepted standards and calls on our international partners to engage constructively on that issue.

In our collective journey towards sustainable development, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is fully convinced that the United Nations development system will, for the foreseeable future, remain a reliable partner in assisting our country in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and our Vision 2030 national development strategy.

With that in mind, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the United Nations development system in order better to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, including through a reinvigorated resident coordinator system. Trinidad and Tobago reiterates the importance of ensuring that the development system adopts a more responsive and flexible approach to development assistance, based on national priorities and needs, while strengthening national ownership and leadership.

The United Nations has long recognized the interconnectedness between peace and development — a symbiotic relationship, where one cannot exist without the other. Ongoing conflicts across the world serve as stark reminders of the need to promote a positive, dynamic and participatory international peace and security architecture that is based on the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation between Governments, international organizations and civil society — one that is in compliance with international obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The illegal trade in arms continues to affect the social and economic fabric of the Caribbean region, including Trinidad and Tobago. That is particularly true of the trade in small arms and light weapons, which is linked to other transnational organized crimes, such as drug trafficking. It threatens the livelihood of our people, undermines the rule of law and challenges our efforts to ensure a peaceful, equitable and sustainable country.

At the global level, Trinidad and Tobago fully subscribes to the object and purpose of the Arms Trade Treaty, which can be leveraged as a mechanism for reducing the incidence of armed violence in the region. Thus, since 2010, Trinidad and Tobago has presented the biennial resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control, which encourages women's participation in disarmament decision-making processes.

On the issue of denuclearization, Trinidad and Tobago resolutely believes that the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains firm in its support for the full and effective implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and is actively considering its signature and ratification.

Trinidad and Tobago has long recognized that international peace and security must be supported by a robust international legal system, including international criminal justice. Trinidad and Tobago, through the work of our former Prime Minister and President, the late Arthur Robinson, was at the vanguard of efforts to establish the International Criminal Court (ICC) two decades ago. Trinidad and Tobago remains a fervent advocate of the Court, underscoring its importance and legitimacy in various forums. We stand resolute in our commitment to support the mandate of the ICC and to promote the universality of the Rome Statue.

The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to make the point that, consistent with the principle of complementarity enshrined in the Rome Statute, the Court's jurisdiction is invoked only when States are unable or unwilling to prosecute those accused of

committing the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. At the adoption of the Rome Statute in June 1998, the late Kofi Annan stated that:

> "Gradually the world has come to realize that relying on each State or army to punish its own transgressors is not enough. When crimes are committed on such a scale, we know that the State lacks either the power or the will to stop them."

Therefore, no individual or State that demonstrates full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights need fear the ICC. Those who fail to cooperate with the Court are contributing to a culture of impunity that undermines the rule of law and denies justice to victims of heinous crimes.

Our best efforts to strengthen multilateral peace and security will surely fall short unless there is real and significant reform of the Security Council. While we welcome the continuation of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, Trinidad and Tobago remains concerned that such discussions have not resulted in tangible progress towards a text-based negotiation. Trinidad and Tobago urges the international community to work collaboratively towards reforming the Security Council so that it can better address current realities and challenges, including those faced by small island developing States, and so that it can improve the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations with regard to the maintenance of peace and international security.

This year, the world has witnessed the unifying power of dialogue and understanding with the recent Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and the Unification of the Korean Peninsula between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Trinidad and Tobago remains optimistic that that historic milestone will usher in a new era of peace, cooperation and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Despite that positive development, we must note that, in our own region, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba continues to stand as the last vestige of the Cold War. In keeping with its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for no one to be left behind, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its persistent call for the termination of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba as soon as possible.

At the heart of our sovereign nations, our cultures and our languages lie individual beings who, at their very core, seek a life of purpose, happiness and the opportunity to live in peace and prosperity. The challenge of our time is to pursue and achieve a sustainable future for all in the face of burgeoning threats to our shared humanity, including but not limited to the threats posed by extreme poverty, rising inequality, climate change and protracted conflicts. Facing that challenge requires deepened partnerships, meaningful dialogue and an appropriate review of established mechanisms and institutions that can, if reformed, exponentially improve our ability to transform lives globally.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains unequivocally committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We commit to continuing to work in good faith with the United Nations, which has long stood as the cornerstone of multilateralism in the face of unprecedented challenges and threats facing humanity, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the President on her election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I would also like to thank her predecessor for his outstanding work during the previous session. Finally, I also want to convey my country's appreciation of the valuable efforts being made by Secretary-General António Guterres.

This year, the United Arab Emirates is celebrating the centennial of the birth of the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of our union and a leader whose vision entrenched the basis and values of the noble humanity in my country and transformed it into a successful political, economic and social model. As we celebrate the centennial of the birth of our founding leader, we realize that we are not isolated from our surroundings and that our success has increased our humanitarian responsibilities as an Arab country towards a region that faces numerous challenges.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed major changes in the international order, the consequences of which are becoming more apparent each day, most

notably the rise of armed terrorist groups that rely on extremist ideologies and seek to destabilize and control countries. What is even more dangerous is the support that rogue States are providing to such groups.

Amid those dangerous challenges, which affect the security and stability of every State, especially in our region, it has become imperative for us to be more active in maintaining regional security by strengthening partnerships aimed at addressing current challenges. We realize that we cannot continue to rely on other States to solve the crises in our region. No single country, regardless of its capabilities, can alone restore security and stability, because confronting the transnational challenges that we face is a collective responsibility.

In our endeavour to achieve regional security and stability, my country has followed a comprehensive approach that addresses the various dimensions of the threats in our region, which we believe can be summed up as the following four challenges. The first challenge is foreign interference in the affairs of the Arab world. Certain countries of the region, particularly Iran, seek to undermine the security of the region by spreading chaos, violence and sectarianism. Iran's interference in Arab affairs has reached an unprecedented level. Ever since those threats reached Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is a sister to all of us, we can no longer afford to remain mere spectators. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia continues to be subjected to a barrage of Iranian ballistic missiles.

The security of countries in the region is interdependent, and our security is tied to that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That is why we responded by joining the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen, which seeks to put an end to the Houthi coup and confront Iran's interference. It is critical in that regard to differentiate between the behaviour of illegitimate armed groups that are committing serious violations and criminal and subversive acts in Yemen, such as the Houthis, and the legitimate measures taken by the coalition, which was formed at the request of the legitimate Yemeni Government. The coalition's goal is to restore stability by taking measured steps that take into account humanitarian aspects and are in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

Despite the coalition's tireless efforts to restore stability in Yemen and alleviate the suffering of its people, the intransigence of the Houthis in resisting serious peace initiatives, as proved by their absence from the recent Geneva talks, has exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The Houthis continue to obstruct humanitarian assistance and to receive Iranian arms, plant landmines and recruit children. In the light of those serious developments, the forces of the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen launched their military operations in Yemen to liberate Al-Hudaydah from the grip of the Houthis in order to achieve a strategic shift that would enhance the prospects for reaching a political solution. As the coalition carries out its operations in Al-Hudaydah and other areas in Yemen, the humanitarian aspects have always been taken into account. Hence, the Al-Hudaydah operation was planned and implemented in accordance with our obligations under international law. We have also strengthened and expanded our humanitarian aid and emergency relief.

At the same time as we are acting to counter the Houthis in the north of Yemen, my country will continue its fight against Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. That terrorist group was severely impacted after the coalition to support legitimacy in Yemen was able to severely damage its forces, cut off its sources of finance and liberate the territories that were under its control.

Mistrust in Iran's intentions and concerns regarding its regional ambitions are not limited to our region. Those concerns were also reflected in the decision taken by the United States to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear agreement and to reimpose sanctions on Iran, which has never ceased its aggressive behaviour in the region or abandoned its intention to develop weapons of mass destruction, even when the international community granted it the opportunity to rectify its policies and behaviour. In that regard, we stress the importance of a united international position against Iran that addresses that country's development of ballistic missiles, its support for terrorist groups and its use of proxy wars to undermine regional and international security.

The second challenge that the region is facing is the spread of extremism and terrorism and the exploitation of modern technology by extremist and terrorist groups in order to disseminate their dangerous ideologies. Although we have made some promising advances against those extremist and terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and have liberated certain cities in Libya, our fight will continue until the scourge is eliminated.

The situation is becoming more dangerous as some States establish media platforms that incite hatred and serve as rostrums for extremist and terrorist groups. We are facing extremist and terrorist ideologies that are equally responsible for the acts of violence committed in the name of those ideologies. The United Arab Emirates has therefore been at the forefront of States combating extremism and terrorism in both the ideological and the security realms. In addition, my country has supported international forces such as the Group of Five for the Sahel joint force as part of our efforts to eliminate extremism and terrorism wherever it exists. My country has also established specialized institutions to counter extremist narratives, promote tolerance and disseminate a culture of accepting others and an optimistic vision at all national, regional and international levels.

Convinced that lasting and global peace can be achieved only through peace between religions, the Forum for Promoting Peace launched an international initiative to build an alliance among the Abrahamic religions and world philosophies. That alliance is based on principles that transcend the paradigm of religious arguments and conflicts. It is based on a paradigm of mutual recognition and cooperation, guided by international covenants and the spirit of our noble values and common virtues.

We stress that our values, which reject both extremism and terrorism, are steadfast and unchanging. We emphasize that our policies to counter and combat the supporters of extremism, violence and hatred make no distinction between a group and a State. To that end, the United Arab Emirates, along with its brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Bahrain, has taken sovereign measures against Qatar. Those measures are pivotal and decisive in confronting extremism and terrorism, and are considered imperative to achieving a secure region.

The third challenge is posed by the prolonged crises in the region, which are merely managed in the absence of political solutions. In that regard, the United Arab Emirates will persist in supporting the existing political initiatives, including by working with all United Nations envoys. In that connection, the Palestinian question continues to wait for the international community to reach a comprehensive, lasting and just solution to end the suffering of our Palestinian brothers. We must underscore that this continued humanitarian tragedy is being exploited by extremist groups and rogue States.

Lastly, we believe that the deterioration in the economic, social and humanitarian conditions in the parts of our region is one of the main challenges we face. The successful experience of the United Arab Emirates has led us to believe that wise leadership, the determination to achieve prosperity and a forward-looking approach are key to building nations and protecting them. My country's foreign policy therefore includes developmental, humanitarian and cultural dimensions in order to support the needs of the people and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the core of the development dimension is the strengthening of economic opportunities and the empowerment of women and youth in countries affected by conflict. We believe that rebuilding Iraq is a prime example of the importance of uniting efforts to help countries recovering from conflict. The international community has to support peaceful and inclusive communities, including through the protection of minorities and the prevention of atrocities committed against them, such as the crimes committed against the Yazidis and the Rohingya.

My country is also playing a vital role in promoting humanitarian and relief assistance to areas affected by conflicts and disasters around the world. The United Arab Emirates aspires to transform the whole region into a global centre for technology, culture and innovation after decades of crises. My country focuses on anticipating challenges and on investing in advanced fields, such as artificial intelligence, space technology and renewable energy. I would like to emphasize that empowering women and youth and investing in their unlimited skills contribute to building resilient and cohesive societies and, eventually, stable and safe countries.

Today, our Arab region is in dire need of a comprehensive regional transformation that will bring it out of chaos and into stability, and out of isolation and unilateralism into openness and planning for the future. We are cognizant that achieving that transformation will not be easy and that our efforts will succeed only by intensifying collective action. Most importantly, each State must fulfil its responsibilities to reach that goal.

I would like to underscore the vital role of the United Nations in supporting political processes, strengthening dialogue and building confidence among Governments so as to maintain international peace and security, especially given the worrying uncertainty

that currently defines the international order. The United Arab Emirates views the historic agreement reached between Ethiopia and Eritrea, under the auspices of the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as significant motivation for the international community to strengthen its diplomatic efforts.

In addition, the international community must take a firm and consistent stance towards States that have hostile policies and violate international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The United Arab Emirates reiterates its demand for its legitimate right to sovereignty over its three islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which Iran has occupied for 47 years, in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We call once again upon Iran from this rostrum to respond to our repeated calls and return our rights to where they belong, either voluntarily or through the available peaceful means for resolving international disputes, at the top of which are direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice or international arbitration.

I would like to emphasize that the vision of the United Arab Emirates for the region is based on the values upon which our country was founded, the positive outcomes already achieved by my country at the national level, and our regional experiences in the region side by side with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with whom we share an optimistic vision and hope for achieving a brighter future for our region and for all peoples.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.